

## For Immediate Release

**27<sup>th</sup> August 2018**

### **Media Background Information**

A public meeting in Deniliquin this week attended by a true cross section of our community highlighted a vital issue for our nation, and served to display the widening gap between regional and urban Australia. This has happened at a time when we need to be united in our endeavours and singular with our focus.

Generations of rural communities have lived and dealt with drought, this is not new, not to be unexpected, is not a natural phenomenon that we are unable to deal with and we will recover from the current situation.

But this could well be the first time that a massive failure and the appalling implementation of public policy has contributed to and exacerbated the situation. Its impacts are likely to be felt at kitchen tables across the country with increased food prices.

Australia's Snowy Mountains Scheme was created, built and is owned by all Australians to deal with the very issues we are currently faced with. The Snowy Scheme along with Hume and Dartmouth Dams in the Southern Basin, was Australia's short-term drought proofing strategy to avoid the situation which has currently arisen.

Major changes in public policy towards water management under the Murray Darling Basin Plan now means that historical planning has been undermined.

The development of the Murray Darling Basin Plan was to create and put in place a plan that provides for the definitive and equitable distribution of water to productive users, the regional communities that live within the boundaries of the basin and at same time ensure the long term viability and preservation of the natural environment. Nobody is disputing the aspirations of the plan but there are many aspects of the Basin Plan that policy makers failed on.

What we are currently experiencing as a consequence of the implementation of this public policy is every irrigated community's worst nightmare and exactly what we all feared.

While we all acknowledge periods of droughts, in the Southern Basin we are now facing a political and bureaucratic "man made" crisis in water management. Currently NSW Murray Valley General Security Irrigation licenses are on zero percent water allocation, while the major storages have considerable quantities of water.

Farmers in the Murray Valley understand there are rules that govern water sharing in the Southern Basin, however NSW Murray Valley are urging the Federal and NSW State Governments, with their Water Managers to explore every avenue to make a parcel of 'water-for-food' available

to underpin an early allocation announcement. This will enable the finishing of winter cereals and stock fodder crops, which need immediate access to water. This will not only help with drought relief but also provide a flow on effect to the regional economies.

This is a critical situation and we urge politicians along with regulatory bodies to investigate every avenue to assist with drought relief.

**This has been endorsed by**

**Edward River Council  
Rice Growers Association  
Murray Valley Private Diverters  
Murray Irrigation Limited  
Speak Up Campaign**

**For Further Information contact** Speak Up Chair Shelley Scoullar 0141 960 785 or email [speakup4water@gmail.com](mailto:speakup4water@gmail.com)