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Media Release

Basin Authority wasting our time

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Healthy Rivers Dubbo, a strong local voice for the rivers and communities of inland NSW has today expressed concern at the Murray-Darling Basin Authority's public statements that deny the clear scientific need to recover more water for the rivers and wetlands of the Basin.

Documents provided to the public for consultations(1) in Sydney this week claim "In many cases, having enough environmental water is no longer the main challenge" - a statement that contradicts strong scientific evidence and community experience.

This fundamentally untrue statement reflects outrageous comments in the media made by Mr Andrew McConville, CEO of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, that it was time "to move beyond water recovery"(2).

The Authority's own documents(3) confirm what Traditional Owners, communities and scientists have been raising alarms about - the Darling/Baaka River and the Lower Murray are in ecological crisis due to upstream overextraction. More water must be recovered in the next ten years or the Lower Murray and the Darling/Baaka rivers will collapse.

Quotes attributable to Melissa Gray, Convenor of Healthy Rivers Dubbo

"The Coorong has just been listed as critically endangered under federal law. There is a fifty percent chance the iconic wetland will be extinct within ten short years. Any suggestion that no further water recovery is required in the next ten years shifts those odds closer to one hundred percent."

"We are in a crisis in NSW. Rivers in the NSW Darling/Baaka Basin are still being pumped until they stop flowing. Rules meant to manage how much water is

diverted from floodplains are so inadequate they cannot be relied on to stop water theft.”

“For the boss of the Authority to be in the public saying we’ve moved beyond water recovery is incredulous. It is not his call.”

“There are specific things that the law says the Basin Plan and Water Act reviews must address:

- Wetland health for migratory bird habitat
- The ecological health of the rivers is secure before water is pumped
- The rights of Indigenous People
- How climate change impacts are managed
- Improving data transparency and water accounting

“Most of the materials provided by the Authority for discussion at the two day consultation are on matters that are outside of the Authority's scope.”

“The Murray-Darling Basin Authority is wasting the community’s valuable time.”

“The need for data transparency and improved water accounting is paramount, yet the Authority is not even bothering to discuss the subject at a two day consultation in Sydney.”

ENDS —

Media contact, available for comment - Melissa Gray, 0431 471 310

References:

1. MDBA, Discussion materials for the Basin Plan Review, 17 September, 2026
2. The Land, 'Move beyond water recovery': MDBA chief says water buybacks won't help now, Zac Braxton-Smith, August 10 2026
3. 2026 Murray-Darling Basin Plan Review Discussion Paper, page 25