



Australian Government



Trim Reference D09/19910

Forests Assessment  
Natural Resources Commission  
GPO Box 4206  
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Sir or Madam,

**Riverina Bioregion Forest Assessment – River Red Gum and Woodland Forests**

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority (the MDBA) has considered the Preliminary Assessment Report on the river red gum and woodland forests in the Riverina bioregion. While we do not have specific comments on the report we would like to provide some information in regard to The Living Murray (TLM), Basin Plan and potential for optimising environmental water delivery (refer to Attachment A). We hope that this information will inform the rest of your assessment process.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide this information to the Natural Resource Commission.

Yours sincerely,

Jody Swirepik  
**ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

October 2009

## ATTACHMENT A

### *The Living Murray*

Once all water recovery measures are complete, TLM will have a portfolio of water entitlements, consisting of different volumes of a broad range of types of water entitlements. This recovered water will be subject to annual allocations the same as for irrigation water, hence, the seasonal allocation varies depending on climate conditions and the way in which each state allocates water. It is expected that in dry years TLM may have significantly less than 500 GL available for use, whereas in wet years there may be more than 500 GL available for use. As of June 2009 TLM had 342 GL on the Environmental Register.

In addition to water recovered under TLM, the MDBA uses TLM water-planning frameworks to manage other environmental water allocations such as, River Murray Increased Flows (made available in the Murray River under the Snowy Agreement) and the Barmah–Millewa Environmental Water Allocation drawing on. The Authority also works closely with the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, state government agencies, catchment management authorities and regional environmental groups resulting in numerous collaborative watering events.

### *The Basin Plan*

In accordance with the Commonwealth Water Act 2007 the MDBA is responsible for preparing and overseeing the Basin Plan which main will;

- set enforceable environmentally sustainable diversion limits on the quantities of water that may be taken from Basin water resources;
- set Basin-wide environment, water quality and salinity objectives;
- develop efficient water trading regimes across the Basin;
- set requirements for state water resource plans; and
- improve water security for all Basin water uses.

Sustainable diversion limits must be set at a level that MDBA determines to be environmentally sustainable. This is defined as the level at which water in the Basin can be taken from a water resource without compromising key environmental assets, key ecosystem functions, key environmental outcomes or the productive base of the water resource.

### *Optimising environmental water delivery*

There is the potential to deliver large volumes of environmental water between Hume Dam and Yarrawonga Weir without exceeding the current regulated channel capacity along this reach of the Murray River. This could be achieved by coordinating regulated releases from Hume Dam with unregulated inflows from the Ovens River.