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Basin communities asked for water saving ideas

NSW Water Commissioner, David Harriss, today asked communities throughout the Murray-Darling Basin to put on their thinking caps to help come up with water saving measures.

“To help offset the social and economic impacts of the proposed Basin Plan – I’m asking Basin communities for ideas that could save water for the environment or improve the delivery of environmental water to assist in meeting the new sustainable diversion limits under the Plan,” said Mr Harriss.

“These water savings ideas will form part of the NSW Murray-Darling Basin Environmental Works and Measures Feasibility Project.”

“This project, which is funded by the Commonwealth Government, will look at eight proposals already nominated by the NSW Government, as well as provide \$1.2 million to assist Basin communities to identify viable local water savings and efficiency measures.”

Mr Harriss said the NSW Office of Water will spear-head the project, consulting with Murray-Darling Basin communities to identify potential projects.

“The draft Basin Plan proposes new sustainable diversion limits that cap the amount of surface water that can be taken from each catchment area.”

“In areas where the current volume of water taken exceeds the proposed diversion limit, this excess or ‘gap’ will need to be reduced.”

“These reductions can be achieved through the sale of water entitlements to the Commonwealth or by using or delivering consumptive or environmental water more efficiently, which I believe is a better option as it will help keep water in productive use.”

Mr Harriss said that examples of infrastructure works or better water delivery systems included the piping of open channels to reduce evaporative and seepage losses or building new infrastructure to flood a wetland more efficiently.

“While these are examples of the types of ideas we are looking for – I’m confident people will have many more solutions to offer. Rural communities are innovative by nature, so it will be interesting to see what comes forward.”

“The Office of Water will register all ideas submitted in writing during the submission period and assess these to develop a potential short-list to provide to the Commonwealth for further work.”

“This project offers Basin communities the opportunity to help reduce local impacts under the proposed Basin Plan and I urge any interested person to share their thoughts on water saving initiatives,” Mr Harriss said.

Submissions will be received by the NSW Office of Water until **Friday 18 May 2012**.

Further information about the project can be obtained from the NSW Office of Water website – **www.water.nsw.gov.au**

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Media contact: James Muddle – 0407 103 507

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