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MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 13 November 2012

**NSW WILL NOT LET BASIN COMMUNITIES BE SOLD DOWN
THE RIVER**

NSW Deputy Premier and Nationals Leader Andrew Stoner and Minister for Primary Industries Katrina Hodgkinson have issued a clear warning to the Commonwealth Government that NSW's concerns regarding the impact of the Murray Darling Basin Plan on farmers and communities must be addressed before the Plan is tabled in Federal Parliament.

"Despite Federal Minister for Water Tony Burke recently declaring the Commonwealth and the States have struck a "reluctant consensus", NSW is not happy with the current Murray Darling Basin Plan," Mr Stoner said.

"From day one, NSW has worked constructively and co-operatively in good faith with the Commonwealth Government to develop a realistic plan, and provided sound advice that appears to have gone unheeded.

"The NSW Government has not engaged in high profile political stunts and theatrics like the South Australian Premier – instead, we have chosen to sit down and get some good policy on the table.

"NSW recognises that a healthy river system is key to sustainable food and fibre production for NSW, Australia and the export markets our producers service."

Ms Hodgkinson said NSW would need to play a key role in the implementation of any Basin Plan.

"The Commonwealth Government should be in no doubt that NSW is the biggest player in the Murray Darling Basin and without our support, this Basin Plan will not go ahead," Ms Hodgkinson said.

"At this stage, the NSW Government and the communities it represents are not happy with the Plan and we will not agree to or implement the Plan unless substantial changes are made.

"In particular, NSW again calls on the Commonwealth Government to:

1. Limit buybacks to allow communities and industries time to adjust;
2. Put greater emphasis on infrastructure and the better use of available water to achieve environmental outcomes;

3. Show a genuine commitment to helping our communities adjust to any changes that this Plan imposes on them; and
4. Listen to the expert advice of NSW hydrogeologists when setting groundwater limits.”

“NSW has long maintained that any further buybacks must be strategic and at a sensible rate, limited to three per cent of entitlement per valley per decade.

“If the Commonwealth Government won’t put this in its plan, the NSW Government will seek to implement its own limit,” Ms Hodgkinson said.

Mr Stoner said the NSW Government’s final response will depend on whether NSW’s concerns are addressed.

“If the current Murray Darling Basin Plan is tabled in Federal Parliament without our concerns first having been addressed, the NSW Government will not be in a position to provide support for the Plan,” Mr Stoner said.

“This much is certain – the NSW Government will not let the State’s inland communities be sold down the river.”