



CLIMATE AND
HEALTH
ALLIANCE

MEDIA RELEASE

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Health groups prescribe 4000GL water for the Murray Darling Basin

The health of communities in the Murray Darling Basin depends upon a sustainable and scientifically based approach to the restoration of environmental flows to the basin, the Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA) said today.

“The current debate around water in the Murray Darling has failed to consider the human health implications of a failing river system,” CAHA Convenor Fiona Armstrong said.

The coalition of more than twenty health organisations will join other groups and communities in Canberra today as part of the *Voices for the Murray Darling* alliance who are calling for the restoration of environmental flows that are based on credible science.

The alliance is seeking the return of at least 4000 GL per year to the basin in environmental flows, a volume cited by Australia’s leading environmental scientists as the minimum required to restore river ecosystem health.¹

“The mismanagement of water in the Basin has led to the destruction of our nation’s major artery – our country’s lifeblood,” Ms Armstrong said.

“This has serious effects on the health and wellbeing of people who live in communities in the basin, but it affects us all, as the entire nation relies on the basin as a food bowl.”

“Restoring the health of the Murray Darling will require changes in the use of water. As health groups, we want to see communities assisted to adapt to sustainable water use, and a process undertaken to support the establishment of secure economic futures for affected communities,” Ms Armstrong said.

“However only a sustainable river system will support communities and local economies and health. It is vital that a national plan for water management reflects the reality that a healthy community and a healthy economy are entirely dependent on a healthy ecosystem, not the other way round.”

CAHA members include: Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW); Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM); Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS); Australian Hospitals and Healthcare Association (AHHA); Australian Health Promotion Association (AHPA); Australian Institute of Health Innovation (AIHI); Australian Women’s Health Network (AWHN); Australian Nursing Federation (ANF); Australian Psychological Society; Australian Rural Health Education Network (ARHEN); CRANAplus; Doctors for the Environment Australia (DEA); Doctors Reform Society; Friends of CAHA; Health Consumers’ Network (Qld); Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA); Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP); North Yarra Community Health (NYCH); Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health (SARRAH); Women’s Health in the North; World Vision.

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¹ http://www.wetrivers.unsw.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Scientific-Statement-on-Basin-Plan_Dec_2010.pdf