



CLIMATE AND  
HEALTH  
ALLIANCE

## Murray Darling Draft Plan fails to protect health

Media release

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The national coalition of healthcare stakeholders, the Climate and Health Alliance, has expressed its disappointment with the draft plan for the Murray Darling Basin released today.

The Climate and Health Alliance has been advocating for environmental flows that will restore the health of the Basin's ecosystems on the grounds that human health and wellbeing is dependent on healthy ecosystems.

"This draft plan will not ensure a healthy sustainable river system into the future," CAHA Convenor Fiona Armstrong said.

"A collective failure in the past to prevent over-extraction in the nation's rivers has led to collapsing river ecosystems. The development of this plan provides an opportunity to reverse this decline – however it appears the Murray Darling Basin Authority have chosen not to do so by ignoring the scientific evidence on what will constitute sufficient environmental flows to restore the Basin's health.

"Our concern is for the health of communities in the Basin. Unless sustainable water management plans are developed, the communities already facing water stress will continue to suffer.

The proposals to make more groundwater available for mining was very disappointing and contrary to the expectations of many members of the community, Ms Armstrong said, especially when there were already questions being raised about water use by the industry and the effects of coal seam gas mining on water quality.

"As professionals and other healthcare stakeholders concerned about the health and wellbeing of the community, we are very disappointed that this draft plan does not map out a bold national vision for sustainable water use in this country.

"Our message is that the implications for human health need to be evaluated and considered in the national water plan; the environmental flow volumes must be based on science, not politics; regional communities should be supported to develop new industries based on sustainable water use to provide them with secure socioeconomic futures; and the impacts of climate change should be considered in the modelling for the Plan."

The Climate and Health Alliance's Briefing Paper on water policy: *Water for the Murray-Darling – Healthy Rivers, Healthy People* is available at: [www.caha.org.au/publications](http://www.caha.org.au/publications)

Media contact: Fiona Armstrong, CAHA Convenor on 0438 900 005 or [convenor@caha.org.au](mailto:convenor@caha.org.au)