

MEDIA RELEASE

## TOO LATE... WE AREN'T FOOLED BY THE TIMING OF MDBA DECENTRALISATION ANNOUNCEMENTS

How transparent are these announcements from the federal coalition concerning the future of the Murray Darling Basin Authority? The communities along the Murray and Darling rivers have called for the decentralisation of this authority for many years, and yet it is at the eleventh hour, and only weeks from an election that they are poised to lose, that we finally see some action.

Of course, we know that Mildura will welcome the relocated MDBA staff and their families, and that this relocation makes sense as it places the decision makers into the environments and communities that their decisions affect.

We have asked for this for a long time, because we have also known that the MDBA plan, and the MDBA itself, needs more connection with the river communities it serves - and more accountability to their needs. It is insulting then, that this move is not announced until it can provide the coalition with a political advantage – and it is particularly disappointing that when it finally comes it is at a time when it is clearly too late to have any impact on the current issues faced by the Darling river.

I support decentralisation, but I do not support this deferring of action to confer political advantage.

I note also that the federal coalition did not 'bat an eyelid' over the closing of the Murray Darling Freshwater Research Centre in Mildura at the end of 2018, indicating how little they genuinely value river health and its optimum/scientific management. Add to this their support for the Wentworth to Broken Hill Pipeline and you develop a picture of what environmental and rural community wellbeing looks like to this government.

- END: 14 March 2019 -