



NATIONAL TRUST

MEDIA RELEASE

Murray Darling Basin heads regions at risk

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The National Trust of Australia today identified the Murray Darling Basin as Australia's most significant 'Region at Risk'.

The Murray Darling Basin comprises 14% of Australia's land area and accounts for 34% of Australia's agricultural production. It has at least 35 endangered bird species with 16 endangered mammals; 20 mammal species are already extinct.

Only 10% of the pre European fish populations of the river remain today. 95% of the Murray River is in a degraded state primarily due to over allocation of water for irrigation. This includes the internationally significant Lower Lakes and Coorong near the Murray mouth, where lack of flows and excessive salt levels are endangering plant and animal populations.

In order to return the system to health 1500 gigalitres of water must be added to the present environmental flows. This means significant quantities of water must be bought to reduce the amount of diverted water.

The new Commonwealth *Water Act 2007*, the new Murray Darling Basin Authority and a basin wide plan are a step in the right direction but the failure of all States and Territories to agree has competing interests obstructing good decision making.

Anita Aspinall, President of the National Trust of South Australia, says that the community must come together as a whole to manage this significant threat.

“The challenge for implementing an effective management regime for the rivers is one of the greatest tests of our national maturity,” Aspinall said. “It requires a high level of technical skill but more importantly idealism and vision which values the common good over sectional interests.

This will only happen if parliamentarians at the State and National level show leadership and if the general public make it clear they support the rehabilitation of the Murray Darling Basin.”

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