

MEDIA RELEASE



Thursday 26 August 2010

PR/171/10

Water weighs on mental health

The Rural Mental Health Network is urging Government to keep the social impacts of the Murray Darling Basin Plan in mind to safeguard the mental health of rural communities.

With the impending release of the draft Plan, the potential impacts headlined discussions at today's meeting of the Network in Sydney.

Rural Mental Health Network Chairman Sarah Thompson said there is concern about the social and economic consequences of any permanent water reductions associated with the Plan.

The Government has indicated major cuts to water allocations are likely but is yet to release the Plan. This is leading to significant anxiety in regions depending on the irrigation industry for income and employment.

"As highlighted in the recently released Stubbs report, the scale of cuts threatened by Government would see significant impacts on the social and economic well being of towns in the Basin," Sarah Thompson said.

"Many people are still recovering from the drought and not knowing what lies ahead with regard to water allocations is contributing to high levels of stress and anxiety."

According to the Stubbs report, the unprecedented population and employment loss experienced by some shires during the drought provides a 'real time simulation' for what may happen across irrigation communities.

"It's crucial for the Government to learn from the drought and to be prepared for the real life consequences of permanently cutting water allocations.

"The delayed release of the draft Plan provides an opportunity for the Government to fully consider how water cuts will impact on social health issues in rural and regional communities," Mrs Thompson said.

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