

MEDIA RELEASE

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QLD Murray-Darling Basin needs to go back on government agenda

Local natural resource management groups have called for the Queensland and federal governments to turn their attention back to the northern end of the Murray-Darling Basin.

“Between the Great Barrier Reef and the Murray River system, the headwaters of the Murray-Darling Basin have dropped off the radar for both levels of government,” CEO for the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee (QMDC), Geoff Penton, said yesterday.

“Our region is experiencing significant challenges in relation to water quality, salinity risk, biodiversity decline and decline in soil fertility, impacting the rest of the Basin, and we’re at the front line of some of the state’s most serious weeds, like parthenium.

“We have had some of the highest historical rates of clearing in the country, resulting in serious fragmentation of habitat and impacts on iconic species, like the northern hairy-nosed wombat, and the threat of salinity is on the increase,” he said.

“Emerging issues like waste management for growing centres, and the management of coal seam gas water, and other mining issues, are also creating significant environmental challenges in the region.”

Mr Penton also said that communities in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin had been working hard to address all these challenges for the past five years, and more, with support from state and federal programs, like the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, and the Natural Heritage Trust.

“With only 60% of the federal government’s previous contributions so far guaranteed for this region, we have grave concerns that the community momentum and enthusiasm will all diminish,” he said.

It is time to look at the top of the Murray-Darling Basin as the place to start seriously investing in solutions to environmental issues that will flow down to other states, he said.

“This could mean that we will be able to continue supporting the current efforts of land managers, local governments and other community groups to improve the health of the region’s natural resources,” said Mr Penton.

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