



The Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP

**Deputy Prime Minister
Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources
Leader of The Nationals
Federal Member for New England**

Ref: MC16-007538

Ms Rebecca Hersant
Australian Local Government Women's Association Queensland Branch
PO Box 3226
LOGAN CITY QLD 4114

12 SEP 2016

Via email: admin@algwaqld.asn.au

Dear Ms Hersant,

Rebecca

Thank you for your correspondence of 16 August 2016. I note the resolutions of the Australian Local Government Women's Association and welcome its contribution to the discussions around these important issues.

As the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, I am acutely aware that water is of fundamental importance to rural businesses and communities. I am pleased to confirm I am prioritising infrastructure investment over water purchasing in the Murray-Darling Basin water recovery programme. We have committed over \$8 billion for irrigated agriculture to modernise irrigation infrastructure, improve on-farm water efficiency and deliver environmental works and measures. These steps will help ensure that the Murray-Darling Basin Plan delivers a balanced outcome for the economy, communities and the environment.

I appreciate that communities in the Northern Basin need certainty about the scale of the remaining water recovery. This is being addressed by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority Northern Basin Review, which is drawing on advice from the Northern Basin Advisory Committee. The review will consider social, economic and environmental impacts and will inform if any adjustments are required to Northern Basin water recovery targets.

In the context of the review stakeholders and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (the Authority) have been discussing the development of a 'toolkit' of measures that could be implemented as an alternative, or in complement to, water recovery measures. I see merit in many of these proposals and have discussed them directly with representatives from across the northern Basin. I look forward to considering them further when the Authority makes its recommendations to me off the back of the Northern Basin Review.

I am also pleased to advise you that the Australian Government is getting on with the job of rolling out the \$500 million National Water Infrastructure Development Fund. On 10 June 2016, I announced funding of \$550,000 for a feasibility study into options for increasing water security in the Border Rivers, including the option of a new dam on the Mole River. The feasibility study is being carried out by the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries.

I appreciate your concerns for the future of communities who depend on our rivers. I want to reassure you that I am using my experience in rural and regional Australia to ensure that the Basin Plan achieves the best possible social, economic and environmental outcomes for the Basin and its many industries and communities.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barnaby Joyce', written in a cursive style.

Barnaby Joyce MP