

## QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 644

**asked on Wednesday 30 April 2008**

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MS JARRATT ASKED THE MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES AND WATER AND MINISTER ASSISTING THE PREMIER IN NORTH QUEENSLAND (MR WALLACE)—

### QUESTION:

Would the Minister detail the results of the latest COAG meeting on the Murray Darling Basin and what it means for Queensland irrigators?

### ANSWER:

At the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting on March 26, 2008, an historic Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for future management of the Murray Darling Basin was signed by the Commonwealth and the Murray Darling Basin States. This new cooperative approach with the inclusion of Victoria is strongly welcomed by the Bligh Government which sees managing growth and planning for the future as vital to securing water for the Basin.

The MOU comprises a Heads of Agreement to enable significant reforms in the basin. Senior Commonwealth and State officials are now preparing an Intergovernmental Agreement.

Under the terms of the agreement, there will be one institution – the Murray Darling Basin Authority – responsible for developing and implementing the Basin Plan, as well as undertaking the current functions of the Murray Darling Basin Commission, which will cease to exist.

Current State water shares will be preserved, unless otherwise agreed by all Basin jurisdictions, while individual States will remain responsible for managing water in their catchments.

Importantly, the integrity of Queensland's water resource plans for the Condamine Balonne, Border Rivers and Warrego, Paroo, Bulloo and Nebine systems will be preserved for the life of these plans.

The Commonwealth will bring forward the National Water Initiative risk assignment framework to cover the gap for compensation arising from any changes to water entitlements from the Basin Plan, for the life of the existing Queensland water resource plans.

The Commonwealth will also fund a wider range of projects from the \$13 billion available under the National Water Plan and will be calling for priority projects from the states in the near future.