



BASINPULSE

connecting people and decision makers

MEDIA RELEASE

Basin communities resolute in supporting change to water management: independent survey

16 November 2010

75% of the Murray-Darling Basin community remains in favour of changes to water allocations to increase water to the natural environment.

This is the key finding of the latest Basin Pulse report that provides the first independent assessment of how the release of the Guide to the Basin Plan and associated consultations have influenced Basin community views on water reform.

Despite the negative publicity surrounding the proposed changes to water management and the anger expressed by many people from the Basin in formal consultations, the research shows that only 5% of the community have changed their position since June.

A significant shift since the initial June survey is in perceptions of responsibility. Twice as many people (46%) now believe that primary responsibility for action on water management rests with the 'whole community'.

Brian Ramsay, a leader of the Basin Pulse initiative, said "This significant result suggests people are looking for ways to be engaged in the change process and make sure that the most important issue in the Basin is dealt with collectively, rather than being a source of division."

"The challenge for governments, both state and federal, will be in finding ways to inclusively develop broader community solutions for water reform and adjustment issues"

Basin Pulse is an independent initiative funded by Inovact Consulting that exists to connect people and decision makers in the Murray-Darling Basin in support of positive, long term change.

This latest Basin Pulse research gathered the views of over 500 people from across Basin communities in late October to understand how attitudes to water reform have shifted since the June 2010 Pulse research.

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Basin Pulse October Research Highlights

Basin Community issue	June Result %	October Result %	Change	Comment
A positive future outlook	46	45	No change	Almost half the population is positively oriented to the future and say their local area will a better place to live in 5 years. 28% say it will be worse.
Responsibility for water reform rests with the 'whole community'	21	46	Significant	Almost half of people living in the Basin now identify the whole community as responsible for water reform. 29% identify the Federal government, which is a minor increase since June.
Change is likely to occur	46	60	Significant	Most people (60%) now say water reform is likely or very likely
Need for Basin wide change to water allocation	80	75	Minimal change	Most people still agree change to water allocation is needed to help the natural environment. Perceptions about the extent of change required have moderated.
Need for local change to water allocations	73	54	Significant	People see Basin-wide change to water allocation as being more necessary than change in their local area.
Urgency for change to water allocations	74	62	Significant	The level of urgency has declined, with less people now saying that change should already be underway or started immediately.
Expected impact on local region if less water for farms and business	68	68	Unchanged	The same number of people believe their region will be worse off if less water is available for economic use.

The Basin Pulse initiative

The Murray-Darling Basin is undergoing far reaching, long-term change. Drought, changing imperatives for water use, volatile international markets, new industries and economic opportunities and emerging social trends are pulling people in the Basin in many directions. Leaders in government, industry, business and the community are grappling with the challenges of transformational change in the Basin. There is an imperative to develop a dialogue with the people whose lives will be impacted by new policies, decisions and services. At Inovact Consulting, we have observed that influential organisations often struggle to connect with people and develop relationships strong enough to enlist support and build commitment for change. New approaches are needed.

The Basin Pulse initiative was designed to be part of the solution for communities, industries and governments as they strive to adapt and reshape the Basin's long term future.

Basin Pulse exists to help bridge the divide between people and decision makers. Our mission is to enable connections to occur and to promote understanding and mutually beneficial engagement and dialogue. As an independent initiative we serve no vested interest.

The first Basin Pulse community survey was conducted in June 2010. The results of the second community survey in October enables direct comparison of results.

The October survey

Basin Pulse surveys are conducted on the telephone by trained interviewers in the seven major regions of the Murray-Darling basin (Queensland basin, Far Western NSW, Northern NSW, NSW Riverina, Eastern Victoria, Western Victoria and the SA basin). Telephone numbers and the person within the household are selected at random. The data reflects the population distribution in each region. The latest survey is based on 511 interviews with people aged 18 years or older and was conducted during the last week of October 2010. The maximum margin of sampling error is plus or minus 4.4 percentage points. The research was designed and funded by Inovact Consulting.

About Inovact Consulting

Basin Pulse is an initiative of Canberra consulting firm Inovact Consulting Pty Ltd (see www.inovact.com.au). Inovact Consulting has been in business for over five years and acts as a specialist advisor to industry, government, research agencies and commercial clients.

We assist clients to improve their organisations, their strategies and their business relationships so that resources, activities and effort are applied effectively. Inovact Consulting has particular strength in working with people to:

- Reform organisations, industries and institutions and
- Design services that translate knowledge into outcomes

We work across many service functions with a particular emphasis on strategic stakeholder engagement and subject areas related to environmental management and primary industries.

Some of our clients have included the National Water Commission, the National Farmers' Federation, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the ACT Department of the Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water and Horticulture Australia Ltd.