



National Irrigators' Council

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Chief Executive Officer

Background to the Basin Plan

- Australia's Policy Framework
- Victorian Water Act 1989
- 1994 COAG reforms and MDB Cap
- National Water Initiative (NWI) 2004
- Commonwealth Water Act 2007

National Water Initiative 2004

- Governments seeking more substantial reform
- Irrigators seeking greater certainty and security
- Environmental groups seeking more water
- Attempts to address over-allocation
- Develops “risk assignment framework” (Vic opts out)

National Plan for Water Security

- Worst drought in history in 2006
- Prime Minister with no environmental legacy...
- National Plan for Water Security (2007)
 - \$10 bn, 10 year rescue package for the MDB
- Re-badged but supported by incoming ALP Government – “Water for the Future”
 - \$3.1bn buy-back;
 - \$5.8 bn irrigation infrastructure efficiency

The Water Act 2007

- ‘Independent’ MDB Authority
- Defines The Basin Plan
- ‘ecologically sustainable limits’
- C’wth Environmental Water Holder
- Additional roles for the ACCC and BoM
- Established risk assignment in law
- Social, economic and environment – really?

The Basin Plan

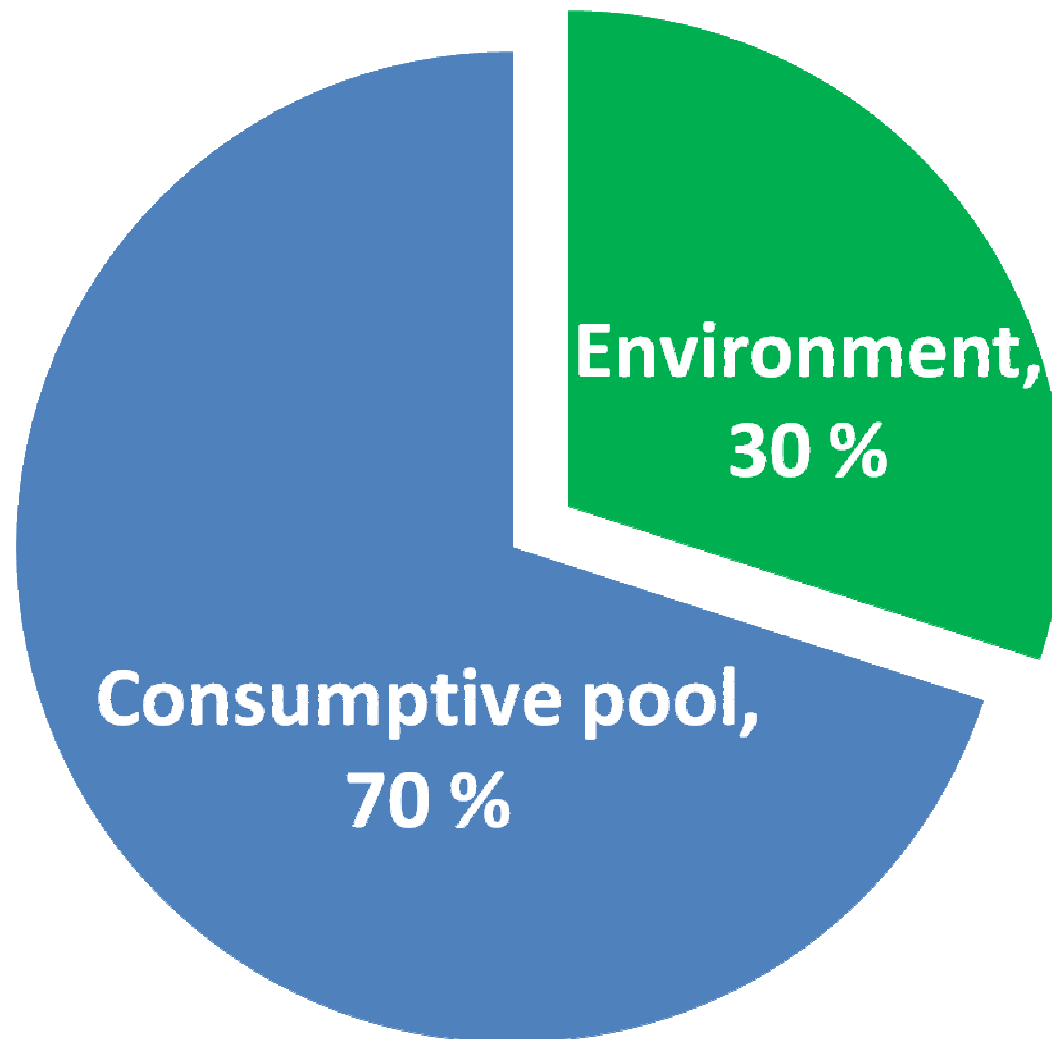
- Water Act 2007 (C'wlth) drives content
- “...optimises economic, social and environmental outcomes”
- Basin Plan prescription is all about environment
- Long-term plan to swing balance back to environment

The Basin Plan - SDLs

- New “long-term average sustainable diversion limits” – SDLs
- Based on “principles of ecologically sustainable development” and “best available science”
- Cannot reduce current environmental water
- Expected cut to current diversions

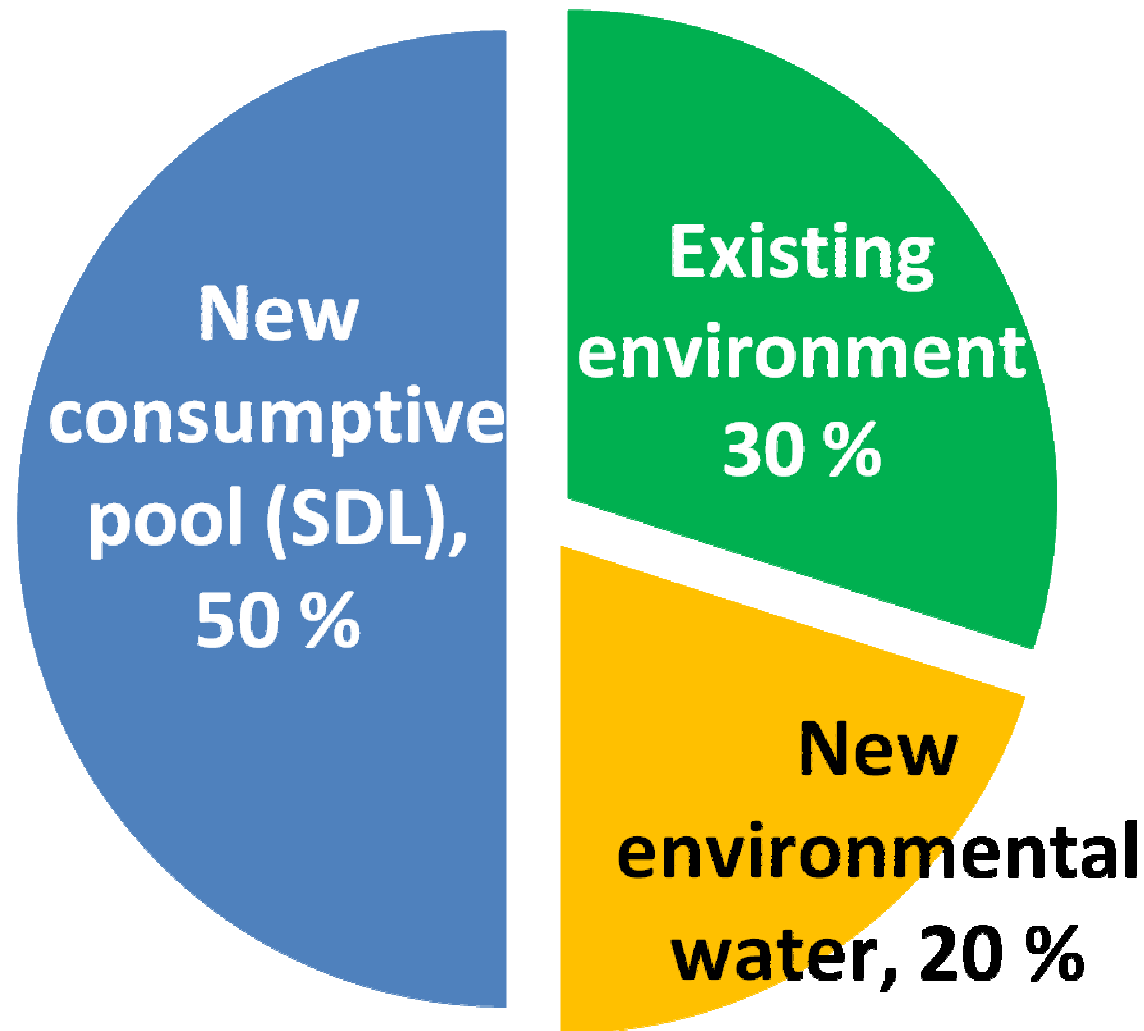
The Basin Plan - SDLs

Current Water Sharing



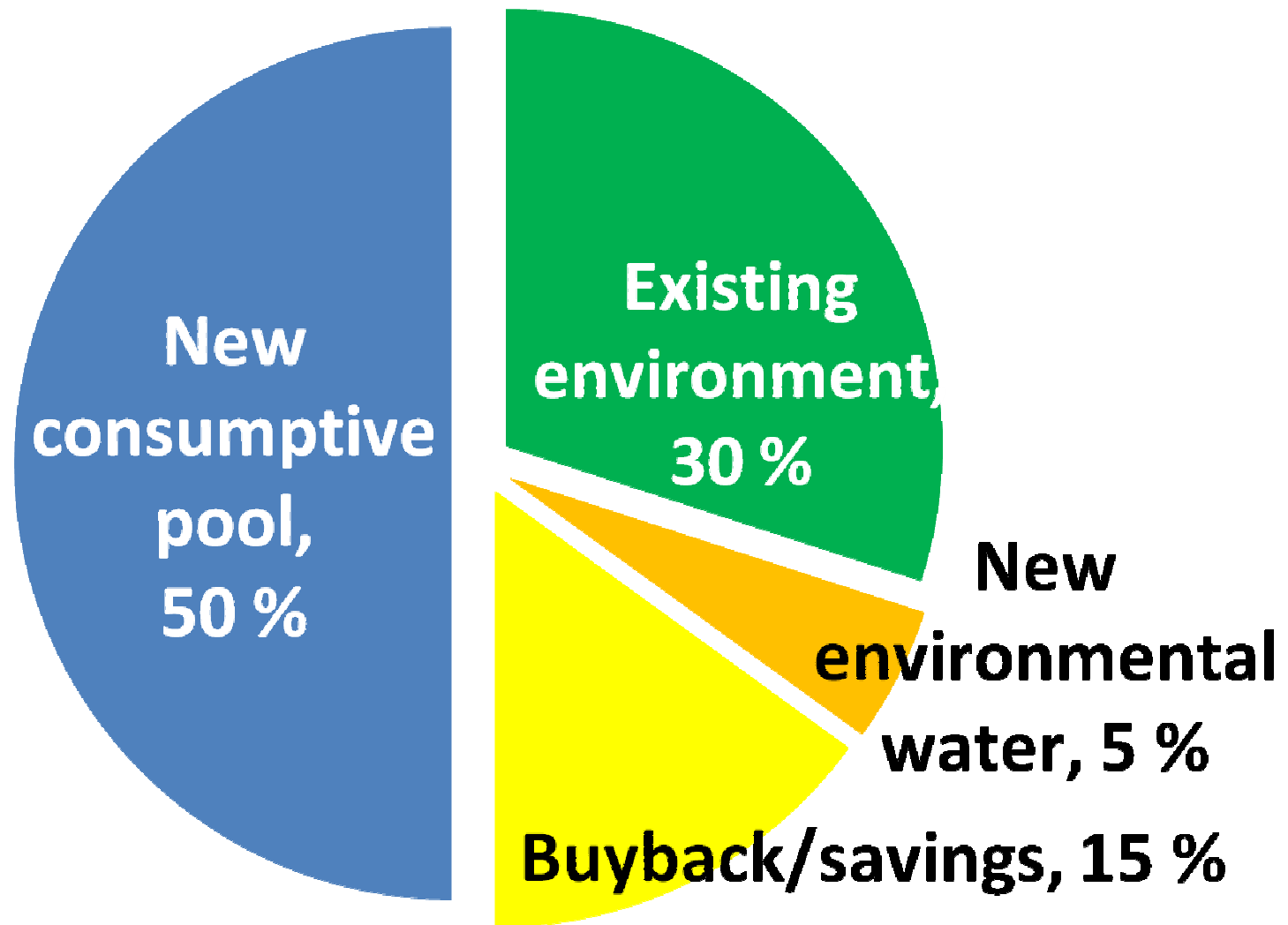
The Basin Plan - SDLs

With new SDLs



The Basin Plan - SDLs

Buyback is an adjustment mechanism



The Basin Plan – Setting SDLs

- SDLs will be set based on environmental needs
- MDBA will consider social and economic impacts
- “Risk range” for environmental needs
eg. 600 GL every 6 years or 400 GL every 7 years

The Basin Plan – Environmental Assets

- 18 key indicator assets identified
 - Includes Hattah Lakes, Chowilla Floodplain
- These assets will drive whole Basin needs
- Tributaries also contribute to downstream needs

Risk assignment (compensation)

- National Water Initiative 2004 sets risk assignment framework – Vic has opted out
 - **Climate change**, variability, drought – borne by irrigators (no compensation)
 - **New scientific knowledge** – irrigators 3%, governments the rest (compensation paid)
 - **Government policy** – borne by governments (compensation paid)
- MDBA will decide what cuts are attributable to

The Basin Plan – How and when?

2010

- Proposed Basin Plan released mid-year
- 16 week consultation



2011

- Minister signs off on plan



2019

- New Water Resource Plan for Murray - implements SDLs etc

General concerns

- Water Act 2007 favours environment and is contradictory
- Consideration of social and economic impacts
- Basin Plan will address water needs only – not whole-of-catchment management
- Science is unclear, untested or unavailable
- Huge workload for MDBA in short time
- Risk assignment implementation unclear

What we've done

- Submissions
- Meetings with key politicians (Wong etc) and bureaucrats
- Prepared policy positions
- Raised concerns in media (national – local), educating and informing media
- Raised awareness among irrigators and community
- Building potential alliances (banks, councils etc)
- Planning strategic response (including political)
- Liaising with (and lobbying) State Governments

What you can do

- Educate yourself – tell family, friends and neighbours
- Write to politicians
- Write letters to the editor supporting sustainable irrigation
- Call talkback radio
- Support your local irrigation/farm groups (MVWG, NIC) so they have sufficient resources to work on your behalf



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- Questions???