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PLANTATION INDUSTRY QUESTIONS CSIRO 'RISK TO SHARED WATER RESOURCES' REPORT

A3P, the Australian Plantation Products and Paper Industry Council, have questioned the narrow focus and unrealistic tree planting scenarios used in the CSIRO report '*Risks to the Shared Water Resources of the Murray-Darling Basin*'¹, released by the Murray Darling Basin Commission this week.

Mr Richard Stanton, A3P Manager-Policy, said "It is essential that **all** the potential impacts of establishing tree plantations are considered when analysing risks in land and water management in the nationally significant Murray Darling Basin."

"The CSIRO report examines a range of risks to the volume of water in the Murray Darling Basin, including climate change, tree planting (or 'afforestation'), groundwater extraction, irrigation water management and farm dams," Mr Stanton said.

"The report presents some unrealistic scenarios for commercial plantation establishment in the Murray-Darling Basin that result in unrealistic estimates of potential water interception.

"The report also confuses rainfall interception with reduced stream flows – other work being done at CSIRO demonstrates that commercial tree planting at any realistic scale will have a minimal impact on stream flows," he added.

Climate change poses the greatest risk to the volume of water in the Murray Darling Basin, according to the CSIRO report.

"The plantation industry welcomes the broadening recognition of the significance of climate change, as a critical influence on the way we will manage land into the future", Mr Stanton said.

"The industry emphasises that tree planting activities, particularly for storage of carbon from greenhouse gases, will be an essential land management option for addressing climate change into the future.

"Trees are being planted in the Murray Darling Basin for a variety of purposes; to mitigate the effects of salinity from saline groundwater flows; to restore and protect waterways, to provide habitat for biodiversity, to store carbon from greenhouse gas emissions and, in suitable areas, for commercial reasons to produce solid wood and paper products.

"Tree planting is an inevitable and essential part of rehabilitating our nationally significant and valuable Murray Darling Basin. Research work in the future will usefully focus on where and how, rather than simplistic treatment of afforestation as a risk," Mr Stanton concluded.

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¹ MDBC Publication 22/06 'Risks to the Shared Water Resources of the Murray-Darling Basin' February 2006
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