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## Media Release

### Will the Murray-Darling Basin Plan improve with age?

A very good whisky is distilled a few times and matured in a barrel for years before the distiller knows whether the result will be good or bad. There are many similarities between whisky making and the recently implemented Murray-Darling Basin Plan, in that it will also take years of maturation and fine tuning, before it is possible to judge whether the Plan has produced good or bad results.

The papers published by the Australian Farm Institute in the next edition of the *Farm Policy Journal*, titled ‘Will the Murray-Darling Basin Plan improve with age?’ provide different perspectives on what has been achieved with the Basin Plan, and what is still left to be done.

‘History will be the judge of whether the water management proposals incorporated in the final Basin Plan will achieve the objectives of the legislation under which it has been developed’ said Mick Keogh, Executive Director of the Australian Farm Institute.

‘In fact, as many of the authors contributing papers to this edition of the *Farm Policy Journal* note, the biggest danger to the success of the Basin Plan is likely to be the view that the work is all done, and that stakeholders can turn their attention to other issues.’

‘Now that the amount of water to be removed from productive use in the Basin and returned to the environment has been set, all the technical work can finally start: detailed environmental priorities need to be published; implementation agreements negotiated with the states; socioeconomic indicators agreed and monitored; constraint management strategies defined, and much, much more.’

‘There is also a consensus that one of the lessons learnt during the making of the Plan is that local consultation cannot be taken lightly as ultimately water management decisions – for productive or environmental use – are made at a very local level,’ said Mick Keogh, Executive Director of the Australian Farm Institute.

‘In many respects, these papers paint a picture of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan being like a relatively immature whisky. There are indications of what the final result might be like, but plenty of opportunity for things to go wrong unless appropriate expertise and vigilance is exercised in future years.’

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If you have any questions, please contact us directly by [email](#) or by phone: (02) 9690 1388