Media Statement

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A MARKET MECHANISM RETURNS WATER TO WETLANDS NEAR SHEPPARTON

Up to 185 megalitres of water was used to replenish a nationally significant wetland near Shepparton in northern Victoria last week, backed by an investment fund that seeks to tackle water scarcity in the Murray-Darling Basin. The purposeful flooding is the latest watering event supported by the Murray-Darling Basin Balanced Water Fund – a novel partnership between The Nature Conservancy, the Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group and Kilter Rural.

“The Fund works with irrigators to purchase and lease water rights with the dual objectives of providing secure water to agriculture and restoring important wetlands” describes Rich Gilmore, Country Director for The Nature Conservancy in Australia. “When water is scarce and agricultural demand is higher, the Fund makes more water available to farmers. When water is plentiful and demand is lower, more is allocated to wetlands, which helps to reinstate the occasional inundation they need for their good health”.

Yambuna Lagoon, located almost entirely on private property on the Goulburn River floodplain downstream from Shepparton, is the site for this flooding event. Covering about 11 hectares, the lagoon was identified as a priority because it is a Wetland of National Significance and is listed as a wetland of importance within the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority Waterways Strategy.

“This is the first environmental watering event to occur within Yambuna Lagoon and aims to restore a more natural hydrological regime and assist in restoring the important ecological values of the area”, explains Rick Webster, Senior Environmental Water Manager for the Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group.

“Several important plant species will be supported by the watering, including two threatened species – River Swamp Wallaby-grass and Floodplain Fireweed.”

So far the Murray-Darling Basin Balanced Water Fund has raised $34 million in capital investments and pledges towards a target of $100 million. “We’re thrilled that these flooding events are proving to be so beneficial for the environment at the same time as the Fund is delivering water to agriculture, demonstrating The Nature Conservancy’s commitment to people and nature,” explained Gilmore.

The water is being delivered by Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group in partnership with the landholder, Environmental Water Trust, Goulburn Broken CMA, Parks Victoria, Victorian Environmental Water Holder and Goulburn-Murray Water.

To find out more about the Murray-Darling Basin Balanced Water Fund visit http://kilterrural.com/news-resources/MDBBWF_second_capital_raise

The Nature Conservancy is a global conservation organisation dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we focus on getting things done efficiently and with the greatest positive impact for conservation. We’re a trusted organisation working in 72 countries on innovative solutions to our world’s toughest challenges so that nature and people can thrive together. We’re tackling climate change, conserving lands, waters and oceans at unprecedented scale, providing food and water sustainably and helping make cities more sustainable. To learn more about The Nature Conservancy in Australia, visit our website or follow us on Facebook.

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