



NSW Irrigators Council Welcomes Move to Cap Water Purchases

NSW Irrigators Council (NSWIC) has warmly welcomed the Federal Government's commitment to introduce legislation to cap water buybacks from irrigators under the Murray Darling Basin Plan to 1500 Gigalitres (GL).

The joint statement today by Environment Minister, Greg Hunt, Agriculture Minister, Barnaby Joyce, and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Environment, Bob Baldwin, fulfils a long standing Coalition commitment to legislate the buyback cap, and a similarly long standing goal of irrigation communities in the Basin to limit the return of water to the Commonwealth from use in irrigated agriculture, to give certainty and limit the impact of water buybacks on regional economies.

NSWIC Chief Executive Officer, Mark McKenzie, said the cap on buybacks was absolutely necessary to limit the economic and social impacts on a number of regional communities where water buyback levels by the Commonwealth have been high, and these local economies are being severely affected.

"A number of regional communities across NSW where water recovery has taken a large proportion of their irrigation water out of use for agriculture have already been severely affected. Less intensive irrigation has meant less employment and less dollars in these local economies, and some are now at tipping point with towns concerned about maintaining their services. That is why we have strongly advocated for a cap on buybacks from farmers, and a greater emphasis on water delivery infrastructure, on-farm efficiency programs, and efficient delivery of environmental water to key environmental sites - to achieve the Basin Plan targets without hammering local farming communities by stripping too much water out of productive use."

NSWIC is urging bipartisan support for the 1500GL water buyback cap - calling on Labour and crossbench Senators to support the legislation.

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