



NSW IRRIGATORS CALL FOR ACTION NOT MORE TALK ON BASIN PLAN

NSW Irrigators Council (NSWIC) has called on the Abbott Government to immediately bring on legislation to cap water purchases from irrigators under the Murray Darling Basin Plan at 1500 gigalitres (GL) and has rejected any Government Inquiries into the Plan until the legislation has passed. The Council says the purchase cap is required to minimise the damaging economic impacts of the Plan already apparent on regional communities, and to urgently provide certainty to communities and irrigation farmers on which they can plan for their future. NSWIC has welcomed the Federal Government's commitment to legislate the purchase cap, and is calling on Labor and the cross bench Senators to support regional communities in the Basin by supporting the 1500GL cap legislation.

NSWIC CEO Mark McKenzie said that while the Murray Darling Basin Authority was continuing to work on benchmarking the economic impact of the Basin Plan; without the cap on purchases in place the economic damage to Basin communities will be so severe that by the time these measurements are in place, the communities will already be beyond the point of recovery.

"The prime example is the Wakool Shire in the southern Riverina, where 50% of the irrigation water has been bought back by the Commonwealth for the environment. That community is now feeling the economic pain of a large drop in money circulating in the district. It is well beyond the tipping point, and it is time to limit damage like this and return some certainty to farmers and businesses by capping buybacks at 1500 gigalitres."

"Basin communities have heard enough talk on the Basin Plan - they now want urgent action to limit further social and economic damage. We can't go back because the Plan is 2/3rds implemented, but the Federal Parliament must move urgently to protect communities from further harm. The Council has discussed the recent push to have a Senate Inquiry into the Basin Plan, but we want the Government, Opposition and the Senate to instead focus on delivering some certainty to the people in the Basin by capping buybacks. The Government must focus instead on recovering water through supply and on-farm efficiency measures. We are calling on all parties and the independents to also pass the recommended amendments to the Water Act, which will address many of the community concerns with the Basin Plan," Mr McKenzie said.

NSWIC has described the parallel push for a NSW State Inquiry into the Basin Plan as premature, and says any Inquiry - Federal or State - should not be contemplated until the 1500GL cap is law; the Water Act is amended; the formal position of the next NSW

Government on the implementation of the Basin Plan is known; and the exact purpose of any proposed Inquiry is determined.

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