



NSW IRRIGATORS APPLAUD NEW WATER PORTFOLIO DECISION

(21 September 2015)

NSW Irrigators Council (NSWIC) has warmly welcomed Prime Minister Turnbull's decision to combine the Agriculture and Water portfolio's under Agriculture and Water Minister Barnaby Joyce - meaning the Water portfolio will be elevated into Cabinet.

NSWIC CEO Mark McKenzie said that with the water recovery task under the Murray Darling Basin Plan is now three quarters assured, the most critical aspect of Plan implementation and bridging the remaining water recovery gap was to ensure Basin communities were not more seriously impacted than they have been to date. Mr McKenzie said that combining Agriculture and Water under Minister Joyce was the best way to get the balance right between enhancing the use of productive water for irrigation through the Government's on-farm efficiency programs and implementing the Basin Plan measures to achieve its environmental outcomes.

"The Plan water recovery target remains the same but how we implement some of the Plan components needs to be revisited. What we need from here is an approach that recovers the remaining water more strategically to minimise further damage to regional economies - some of which have been very heavily impacted across the NSW Basin. Communities such as Mungindi, Warren and Wakool have already been very heavily hit by the buyback of large volumes of their productive water by the Government for the environment. Clearly these communities and many others are at breaking point and further buyback in those districts would be disastrous for their long term prospects for economic recovery!"

"What we need now is a real focus on the triple bottom line. The Plan should not disadvantage the irrigated agriculture sector and the communities that rely on it to meet the Plan's environmental flow targets. There needs to be a more balanced approach to meeting the interests of Basin communities and the environment, and combining oversight of the Plan implementation within the Agriculture Minister's remit is a huge step forward in getting a more balanced Basin Plan outcome," Mr McKenzie said.

ENDS.

Approved: RS / TG

For Further Information:

Mark McKenzie
Chief Executive Officer
M: 0412 075 245

