

IRRIGATORS CALL FOR CAST-IRON ASSURANCE ON WATER PLANS (11 May 2016)

NSW Irrigators Council (NSWIC) has described as an "appalling failure" the admission by DPI Water senior management that the review of Inland Valley Water Sharing Plans (WSPs) has not included its long promised engagement with regional irrigator bodies, and that the current Plans are to be rolled over by the final June 30 legislative deadline.

NSWIC Chairman, Richard Stott, has written to NSW Water Minister, Niall Blair, informing him of the sector's anger over the failure of the restructured DPI Water senior management to engage and communicate with irrigator bodies in the formulation of revised WSPs - despite the repeated NSWIC communications with the Minister and DPI Water senior managers about the vital importance of getting many important changes recommended by regional irrigator groups discussed with industry and modelled ahead of finalisation of new Plans.

Mr Stott said it was extraordinarily disappointing and frustrating that despite two 12 month extensions of time and around \$54 million spent by DPI Water on the review process that the major Inland irrigator bodies are none the wiser. He said that the repeated assurances from the Department that the regional irrigator bodies would be deeply engaged in the review process have come to nothing, and the current renditions of the WSPs are about to be rubber stamped by the Government without the promised industry input.

"This is what happened when the Plans were made in 2004, and it's about to happen again - despite our warnings to Minister Blair and his predecessors for this not to happen again! We have a belated promise from Deputy Director General Water, Gavin Hanlon, that there will be extensive consultation after June 30, but we have no assurance whatsoever that the aberrations in a number of the WSPs have been, or will be, fixed once the Minister signs off on them."

"Our Members are rightly disinclined to believe more promises from the Department, when it has not been able to deliver on its many previous commitments to us over the last 18 months! The Minister must now step in and give us cast-iron assurances that the WSP problems will be fixed and the regional irrigator bodies actively engaged in amending the rolled over Plans post June 30!" Mr Stott said.

ENDS

Approved: RS / TG

For Further Information

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