

## **NO FURTHER WATER BUYBACKS UNTIL FULL IMPACT OF BASIN PLAN IN THE SOUTHERN BASIN IS KNOWN (29 September 2016)**

NSW Irrigators Council (NSWIC) has called on the Federal Government to formally suspend any further water purchase tenders in the Southern Murray Darling Basin until the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) has completed a comprehensive analysis of the impact of the Basin Plan water recovery on local communities across the southern valleys. The Council has also called on the MDBA to urgently ramp up its impact assessment program in the Southern Basin, after the recent release of the Authority's Northern Basin social and economic impact analysis in northern NSW valleys and in Queensland found significant job losses of up to 35% in irrigation communities.

NSWIC CEO, Mark McKenzie, said the devastating economic impact data on major irrigated agriculture reliant townships in the Northern Basin does not bode well for irrigation industry centres in the Southern Basin, where very large volumes of water have already been recovered by the Commonwealth.

"We are very aware of the anecdotal evidence of huge community impacts in the Murray, Murrumbidgee and Lachlan Valleys, where the largest volumes of water for the environment have been bought back by the Federal Government. Given the data on the devastating impacts in the north, the Government should formally commit to a halt in further water purchases until the same evaluation of impacts has been completed in the south. The Government should also request the MDBA to urgently prioritise its social and economic impact analysis in the south – to provide accurate data on community impacts from water recovery to date."

Mr McKenzie reiterated the NSWIC position that there should be no further water recovery in the Basin until a thorough analysis of what volume of water will be recovered through water supply infrastructure, on-farm efficiency programs, and the environmental offset projects proposed by State Governments to boost water savings, have been assessed and any remaining water recovery gap to meet the Basin Plan target is identified.

"We believe we are very close to achieving the 2,750,000 megalitre target in the Plan – particularly if the MDBA reduces the recovery target in the north, as we believe it should. If there is a remaining recovery gap it can be reached by the Commonwealth making strategic water purchases that do not further impact already heavily affected regions, so there is no reason to push on with any more general tender water purchases from irrigators until we have a clear picture of the Plan's impact to date across the whole Basin."

**ENDS.**

Approved: RS/TG

**For further information:**

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