

SA SELFISHNESS ON BASIN PLAN LAID BARE (18 November 2016)

NSW Irrigators Council (NSWIC) CEO, Mark McKenzie, has slammed as “incredibly selfish” the South Australian Water Minister’s response to the prospect that an additional volume of 450GL of water being recovered through the Murray Darling Basin Plan will not be possible because of devastating social and economic damage to upstream communities.

“We absolutely condemn the SA Water Minister, Ian Hunter’s, outburst today against Deputy PM Barnaby Joyce – calling on the Prime Minister to sack him. Minister Joyce has stated the ‘bleedingly obvious’ conclusion that the Basin Plan’s recovery of the Special Environmental Account water target of an additional 450GL is not possible without devastating consequences for regional communities in NSW, Victoria and Queensland, and in SA too. Under the Basin Plan legislation this water cannot be recovered unless it has neutral or positive social and economic impacts, but as we now know from recent research by the Basin Authority and the Victorian Government the water recovery to date has caused very serious impacts on Basin communities already – making further water recovery completely untenable!”

“Yet here we see the SA Minister lashing out – insisting that despite what the Plan legislation says the additional 450GL must be recovered whether or not it causes even greater economic damage to upstream communities. The absolute selfishness of the SA Government over its obsession with getting more water through the Murray Mouth at any cost has been laid absolutely bare, for all to see. There has already been totally unacceptable social and economic damage to regional communities in the upstream States, but the SA Government wants to heap up even more destruction!”

“NSWIC says to Minister Hunter and Premier Weatherill – enough is enough! We will not trade off the survival of our Basin communities for the selfish benefit of South Australia! We will not be supporting the demands of SA when that means economic vandalism of our Basin communities. Up to 35% job losses in some communities in NSW and Queensland has been devastating. That level of job losses would not be acceptable to the SA Government, and is NOT acceptable to irrigation communities in NSW, yet here is Minister Hunter throwing a tantrum because the upstream States and the Commonwealth are saying NO MORE! It is high time that SA began to work collaboratively with the other Basin States on achieving the best possible environmental outcomes and not simply focusing on achieving a flow target - that we now know is not achievable under the provisions of the Plan legislation,” Mr McKenzie said.

ENDS.

Approved: RS/MM

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