

NIC confirms commitment to compliance

The National Irrigators Council (NIC) has broadly endorsed the NSW Matthews' report principles around compliance and greater transparency.

CEO, Steve Whan said "at the time allegations on compliance in the Northern Basin were raised, I made it very clear that it was critical that everyone have confidence that water was going where it was intended.

"Compliance is as important for water-users as it is for the general community.

"The Matthews report has made some serious findings about compliance activities in the NSW Government. It certainly is no whitewash.

"NIC agrees that the principle of having an independent body to administer compliance activities is sound.

"Water-users in NSW already fund compliance and we want the money spent effectively and efficiently. It does not appear to have been the case.

"The Matthews report criticised the Department for failing to resolve specific allegations made about a couple of farming families. It is unfair that allegations remain unresolved - both to the public and the people accused.

"It needs to be clear that the overwhelming number Murray Darling basin irrigators already use modern meters to measure the water they extract. But the irrigation industry remains willing to work with Government to ensure that all extractions are accurately measured using best available technologies.

"Water-users will work with Government on the practical detail of implementing recommendations. We also await the MDBA and Senate findings with interest. ICAC has also had issues referred to it and its powers are very like a judicial inquiry.

"Water-users in the Murray Darling Basin work hard to supply Australian's with the food and fibre they consume and exports that generate jobs and foreign income. They produce more, using far less water than they used to, and that means we are starting to see real environmental benefits.

"Water-users are not afraid of inquiries or compliance. What they don't want is broad generalisations that denigrate all water-users or risk the 20 year journey of water reform, culminating in the difficult task of implementing the basin plan."

Media Contact: Steve Whan 0429 780 883
Monday 11 September 2017