

Avoid headline seeking and Wentworth report could be useful

National Irrigators Council (NIC) CEO, Steve Whan says the release of the Wentworth Group's report into the Murray Darling basin plan is a relevant, though not 'independent', contribution to the implementation of the plan.

Steve Whan said "as I said on the first two occasions the Group released findings, they have a legitimate role in advocating the environmental health of the Murray Darling Basin, but they diminish their 'independence' by being sensationalist.

"NIC agrees there are some very challenging issues to be dealt with. Constraints removal is one.

"It's easy for someone sitting in Canberra to make statements about needing to speed this up. On the ground though, we are talking about flooding people's properties, and most Australian's would agree that needs to be approached in a cautious and consultative way.

"We strongly disagree with the public comments made by the group's spokesperson criticising investment in irrigation infrastructure.

"We have seen modernisation across thousands of irrigation properties, most family owned farms. It has enabled production of our food to be maintained, while returning large quantities of water to the rivers.

"Buyback is cheaper for the taxpayer, but it is very expensive for rural communities. As the Murray Darling Basin Authority's socio economic research confirms *'recovering water through infrastructure rather than purchase lessens the impact of water recovery at the community level'*.

"NIC would agree with the Wentworth Group that compliance needs to be effective, a point we have made repeatedly, but we would also continue to point out – as the final Matthews report does - that the vast majority of irrigators do the right thing.

"Unfortunately, some of the public comment from the Wentworth Group on metering is not accurate. The overwhelming majority of water users on the system have modern and accurate meters. We need to tackle the exceptions not the majority.

"We do agree with the group that structural adjustment assistance has been inadequate and poorly targeted.

"Irrigators want to see a healthy Murray Darling, with healthy communities and the capacity to produce the food and fibre that benefits all Australians. We are willing to engage constructively with all Governments and environmental advocates, including the Wentworth group, to try to achieve that."

NIC has made comment on this Wentworth Group report previously, those releases can be found here:

- [Wentworth Group headline seeking unhelpful](#)
- [Wentworth Group unduly pessimistic](#)

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