



MEDIA RELEASE

Basin projects withdrawn is a lose-lose for communities and the environment

3 July 2026, Canberra ACT – Basin officials have confirmed 14 environmental projects will be withdrawn from formal recognition under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan placing Southern Basin communities at risk of losing up to a further 355 GL of water through no fault of their own.¹

"The environmental outcomes from these projects cannot be achieved by 'just adding more water'," said CEO of the National Irrigators' Council (NIC), Zara Lowien, "in fact, these projects are essential to actually use all the water the Government has already recovered from farmers."

"Withdrawing these projects is a lose-lose situation for communities and the environment."

The withdrawn projects form part of the Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism (SDLAM), which required Basin states to deliver critical on-ground projects to maximise environment benefit of environmental water. They must be operational by December 2026 to secure offsets against Southern Basin water recovery targets.

"Thirty-years of water reform has already shifted 1 in 3 litres of water out of agriculture, to the environment, and now communities are holding their breath to see how Government's respond to what will be an inevitable shortfall", said Ms Lowien.

"With 14 projects now officially withdrawn, up to 355GL shortfall may occur, putting Southern Basin communities in the firing line through no fault of their own, despite growing evidence that water is no longer the biggest problem facing the Basin," said Ms Lowien.

"They've already got enough environmental water under the Basin Plan, now it's time they work out what they're going to do with it and optimise this investment for the environment."

NIC calls on Governments to find a new way forward to invest in measures that the science says the Basin needs, including a reworked community supported constraints program and complementary measures such as fish passage improvements, carp control, riparian vegetation management.

"There must be no further changes to current Sustainable Diversion Limits, and Basin Governments must get on with the job of delivering the sorts of projects which the science now says is the biggest priority for the Basin and farmers, scientists and Basin Communities are collectively calling for."

"Basin communities should never have had to carry the risk of Government failure, these projects are a government responsibility to implement, and we call on all Governments to step up to find a solution that doesn't put communities in the firing line," said Ms Lowien.

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Further information is available here: [National Irrigators' Council - Murray Darling Basin Plan](#)

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¹ [Basin Officials Committee Communique – June 2026 | Murray–Darling Basin Authority; Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism: 2025 Assurance Report](#)