



National Irrigators' Council
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MEDIA RELEASE

‘Enough is enough’: NIC says at Bush Summit

27 August 2026, Dubbo NSW: The National Irrigators' Council (NIC) sent a clear message at the National Bush Summit: *'enough is enough'* of taking water away from farmers.

"Communities are at tipping point right around the Basin," said Zara Lowien, CEO of NIC, after 1 in 3 litres of water has been removed from farming over more than 30 years of reform.

"Removing water from farming by any means is a problem – enough is enough," said Ms Lowien, "farmers can't continue to absorb the change".

The Summit comes as the Basin Plan is under review, and SunRice has just announced major changes to their rice packaging operations in the Riverina citing water policy as the cause of large-scale redundancies.

"This is the opportunity for a refocus and get the balance right," said Ms Lowien, referring to the ongoing Basin Plan Review.

"What happened with SunRice is the canary in the coal mine, industry has been warning of this," said Ms Lowien.

"After 30 years of reform, enough is enough, governments must step out of farmers lives and let them get on with it – they need stability."

"When farming does well, so does the community," said Ms Lowien.

The panel also included Barnaby Joyce MP and Andrew McConville (Murray Darling Basin Authority), with the panel agreeing on the need to better manage the portfolio of water held by the Federal Government, who is now the largest water licence holder in the Basin.

"Farmers don't farm the same way today as they did, 5, 10 or 20 years ago, why should we think the use of water for the environment shouldn't get better too," said Ms Lowien.

The Basin Plan introduced new lower limits on water diversions, called Sustainable Diversion Limits (SDLs), which are now in effect across the Basin, with diversions now less than 28% of total inflows. This means under the current rules within the Murray-Darling Basin, any new water user – like a data centre or a new dam – must operate within those limits, meaning its water comes out of the existing water pool, not on top of it and therefore from an existing user.

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