



MEDIA RELEASE

Buybacks are not what is needed

15 October 2026, Canberra ACT: Basin communities have responded to the *Water Amendment (Ending Further Murray-Darling Basin Water buybacks) Bill 2026* introduced in parliament today, saying "it's time to move beyond 'just adding water'".

"The science is clear, restoring the remaining environmental challenges in the Basin cannot be solved by "just adding water"", said CEO of National Irrigators' Council, Zara Lowien.

Data from the Murray-Darling Basin Authority shows 92% of environmental indicators would not improve by simply recovering more water, but require direct measures instead.

'The Basin has changed, 30 years of reform has removed 1 in 3 litres of water from farming, to now have Sustainable Diversion Limits in place," said Ms Lowien. "This means that over 70% of water in the Basin now remains in rivers, that job is done."

"This is not about trade-offs between the environment and farming – this is about finding the right solutions for today's environmental challenges," said Ms Lowien.

Today's environmental priorities include invasive species, habitat restoration, floodplain and wetland health and addressing barriers to fish migration.

"These challenges require the right tools for the job," said Ms Lowien.

"Basin communities are frustrated that Canberra is continuing to put past politics ahead of what the environment and communities are both calling for today, it's time they move forward and notice things have changed."

Today's announcement also included a Water Security Taskforce. This follows concerning findings in the Basin Plan Review Discussion Paper that:

'Much of this river infrastructure, including for town water treatment and supply, is near or passed its engineered life span and increasingly vulnerable to failure... Current capital expenditure is one-third to half the necessary level to sustain this important asset base over the long term'.¹

"It's ridiculous the Federal Government is contemplating spending billions of dollars on more water buybacks, when the science says they aren't what is needed, and while critical water infrastructure is at risk of failure from underinvestment," said Ms Lowien.

[ENDS]

Media Contact: Zara Lowien, CEO: 0427 521 399, ceo@irrigators.org.au

¹ [2026 Murray–Darling Basin Plan Review Discussion Paper](#) [69].