

Wednesday, 1 September 2010

No more Basin Plan delays – stop playing with our lives

Frustration is building among irrigators and communities in the Murray Darling Basin as delays to the release of the Basin Plan continue.

The National Irrigators' Council said the ongoing delays were causing anxiety and uncertainty in communities throughout the basin and the lack of communication from the Murray Darling Basin Authority is only worsening the situation.

“What are they doing?” NIC CEO Danny O'Brien said. “First we were told to expect a mid-year release. Then it was early August. Then it was put off again for the election on very spurious grounds. The election was 10 days ago and the MDBA's latest board meeting was two days ago but we're all still being treated like mushrooms.

“The MDBA needs to remember this is affecting people's lives, their businesses and their communities. Tell us clearly what is going on. The ongoing delays are only heightening uncertainty and leading people to think the Authority has something to hide.

“It was bad enough that the release of the Plan was put off during the election but these further delays are intolerable.”

Mr O'Brien said the NIC understands that the Authority is undertaking further social and economic impact studies and this was one of the reasons for the delay.

“If this is the case then that is good but why wasn't this work done earlier? It appears to be another reflection of the fact that this whole process is all about more water for the environment and any impacts on people are treated as an afterthought.

“We have consistently said that to be successful the Basin Plan must balance the needs of the environment with those of irrigators, food production and rural communities. If the social and economic modelling is merely a body count after the fact then it is pointless. ‘Sustainable’ doesn't just apply to the environment.

“A Basin Plan that is unbalanced will threaten tens of thousands of jobs, send food prices skyward and force families off their farms.

“It's time the MDBA stopped stuffing us all around and got on with it.”

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