

9 November 2016

Bipartisan Approach Means No More Productive Water Needs to be Recovered from the Southern Murray Darling Basin

The National Irrigators' Council (NIC) today welcomed the bipartisan passage of the Water Legislation Amendment (Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment) Bill 2016 which means that no more productive water needs to be recovered from the Southern Basin.

NIC CEO, Tom Chesson said the Deputy Prime Minister's comments that the passing of the Bill "*... will eliminate the need for further water recovery in the Southern Basin*" was heartening news for communities already being turned into ghost towns by the removal on over four million megalitres or water entitlements from the Murray Darling Basin since 2004.

Mr Chesson said the bipartisan nature of the Bill was especially pleasing and stood in stark contrast to the #backpackers tax fiasco.

We wholeheartedly agree with DPM Joyce who said; "There are smarter ways to achieve the Plan's triple-bottom line outcomes than by simply buying back water from communities that depend on that water for their livelihoods. That's what the SDL Adjustment Mechanism is about, being smarter and more adaptive.

Deputy Prime Minister Joyce noted: 'It is anticipated that the remaining gap in the Southern Connected System will be around 580 GL after existing infrastructure projects are complete and consistent with the findings of the 2015 stocktake report, an SDL adjustment of over 500 GL is now within reach.

Mr Chesson said at the last MDB Ministerial Council Meeting in April this year the Council agreed that complimentary measures such as carp control, fish habitat restoration, fish ways and cold water pollution could be included as SDL Offset Measures.

"In his Second Reading Speech accompanying the legislation DPM Joyce made it clear that the Australian Government was aware of potential 'complimentary measures' and said the Bill passed today would help facilitate their inclusion into the SDL offset proposals.

"State Governments since the April MinCo meeting have proposed eight 'complimentary measure' projects in addition to the 36 other SDL offset projects already put forward.

Mr Chesson said given the large number of impressive projects put forward by the Basin States there should be no problem in getting well over 580 Gigalitres of SDL offsets.

"When coupled with the 'complimentary measures' the final number should easily be far in-excess of 800 Gigalitres of SDL offsets which would provide achievable real world environmental outcomes without destroying the social and economic fabric of communities," Mr Chesson concluded.

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