



National Irrigators' Council

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Time for Localism to Be 'Hard-wired' into the Basin Plan

The National Irrigators' Council (NIC) today called on the incoming Minister to ensure that 'localism' would be finally 'hard-wired' into the Murray Darling Basin Plan (MDBP) with the decentralisation of the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) to communities hard hit by the MDBP.

NIC CEO, Tom Chesson said during the development of the Basin Plan, the then Chair, Craig Knowles repeatedly promised communities that both 'localism' and 'adaptive management' had been hard wired into the Basin Plan's DNA.

"To date neither 'localism' nor 'adaptive management' have played a central role with the MDBA considered by many to be a remote 'Canberra knows best' organisation which has a poor reputation for meaningful consultation with impacted communities."

"If the Basin Plan is to have 'localism' hardwired into its DNA then it needs to be truly local."

"As a direct result of the Basin Plan and previous 'historic' reforms, over 4 million megalitres has been removed from production. This is having a major impact on employment and growth in many communities.

Mr Chesson said NIC Members have a symbiotic relationship with local communities. We can't survive without them and they wouldn't be there without us.

"Time and time again local communities have stood by the irrigated agriculture sector. Together we are growing the Nation's economy.

"We will fight for communities underpinned by irrigated agriculture and bring jobs back to them where ever and whenever we can," Mr Chesson said.

"We do not have a preferred regional location for the MDBA, however it does make sense for it to be situated across a number of communities," Mr Chesson said.

"Well paying jobs that are not reliant on the vagaries of the weather or commodity prices, are needed in regional communities.

"Ten staff with \$20,000 a week in wages from the MDBA in a smaller regional communities could help crisis proof that town," he said.

Mr Chesson said he did not believe that Coalition Members such as Sussan Ley, Andrew Broad, Damian Drum or Mark Coulton were anything but supportive of the idea of relocating parts of the MDBA to their electorates and urged them to support the incoming Minister to make well paid Canberra based Government jobs, local jobs.

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