

Irrigators' Add Voice to Energy Review

National Irrigators' Council (NIC) CEO Steve Whan says Irrigators' [submission to the 'Finkel Review'](#) highlights the major changes that need to be made to the operation of the electricity market if Australian food and fibre producers are going to be able to continue to provide irrigated product for the Australian and international market.

Steve Whan said “everyone knows that to produce the food we eat and the natural fibres we love, you need water, soil, sun and great farmers – but many Australians probably don't think about just how important electricity is as well.

“In irrigated agriculture it is particularly important. High energy prices impact the viability of local production of milk, fresh fruit and veg, rice, sugar and so many other products.

“Like many other representatives of industries producing goods for Australia, the NIC is hoping the Finkel report can be a ‘circuit breaker’ on the energy price spiral and the political blame game.

“It's pretty simple really, if you don't have reasonably priced energy, you don't produce goods in Australia and that means you don't have local jobs and living standards fall.”

“Irrigators have called for:

- A 30% reduction in regulated electricity prices (based on the 2014-15);
- A medium to long term price averaging 8 cents per kilowatt-hour for the electrons and 8 cents per kilowatt-hour for the network;
- Rule changes via the Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC) to change the way electricity networks' regulated asset base (RAB) is calculated;
- A suite of food and fibre tariffs available across the NEM
- A water energy productivity program designed to fund and accelerate the adoption of energy solutions;
- Fundamental reform of the National Electricity Market (NEM) to address the lack of genuine competition, the operation of the bidding process and to provide a market where consumers' interests are fairly represented; and
- Stability and certainty in national energy policy to allow investment.

Steve Whan said “irrigators' have been campaigning on negative impacts of high energy prices for some years. Make no mistake, when an irrigator's electricity bill more than doubles in seven years it puts food production and regional jobs at risk.

“We certainly hope the Finkel report provides a focus for real action by Australian Governments.”

Media Contact: Steve Whan 0429 780 883

Friday 3 March 2017