

## Water Reform Journey Producing Results

Hard work by irrigators and irrigation communities is reflected in the achievements of the National water reform agenda highlighted in the [Productivity Commission's draft report delivered today](#).

CEO of the National Irrigators Council, Steve Whan says "the Commission's draft progress report on National water reform makes it very clear that a huge transformation has taken place in Australian water use since the reform process started in the 1990's and particularly since the 2004 National Water Initiative."

The productivity commission says that because of this reform "*water planning arrangements are in place for most areas where water is used intensively. By balancing consumptive and environmental water use these plans provide a firm foundation for sustainable water use. While the full benefits of providing water for the environment will take time to realise, there is already some evidence of improved ecological outcomes from environmental flows.*"

Steve Whan said "Irrigators and their communities have been at the forefront of this agenda with the water market driving efficient decisions on water use and Australian farmers leading the world with investment in water efficiency and productivity."

NIC would welcome a number of themes in the report including:

- Strong recommendations to include extractive industries in water management frameworks;
- More local input and management of environmental water and integration with 'complementary waterway management'; and
- Recommendations on indigenous engagement;

We would have more questions about recommendations involving:

- Future Government funding of irrigation infrastructure- to ensure that the overall assessment of benefit would include regional and economic development benefits;
- Pricing and pass on costs - which might result in increased prices for some irrigators.

"The recent trade figures confirmed that irrigated agriculture is driving jobs and earning foreign income, along with supplying Australians with their fresh fruit and vegetables, dairy products, nuts, wine, rice and cotton.

"And they are doing it using far less water, per tonne of product, than ever before" Steve Whan concluded.

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