

Environmental campaigner academics offer stark choice

A group of academics campaigning for the Murray Darling Basin plan to be tossed out and restarted, offer our Federal MPs a stark choice, says National Irrigators Council (NIC) CEO Steve Whan.

Steve Whan said “this week we have seen a narrow and ill-considered call from some environmental scientists to halt the basin plan. It’s a call that ignores positive impacts of more water efficient agricultural production and ignores the basin plan review which showed early positive outcomes, but pointed out. that environmental recovery would take many years.

“I do wonder what the Australian public will make of a call that says throw out the basin plan and start again.

“It would be a brave (but foolish) major political party that went down the path of another 5 years argument, uncertainty, social upheaval and environmental degradation. No sensible person can back a position that says - keep the bits one side likes and throw out the rest.

“That’s exactly what this call amounts to.

“I’ve got huge respect for academics who devote their lives to objective study. But none for selective quoting to serve a predetermined goal.

“The group’s assessment of the benefits of infrastructure is riddled with omissions; and the pronouncement of environmental failure is premature and not supported by more recent assessment.

“The biggest problem is the group’s failure to recognise that the objective of the basin plan is for an outcome that returns environmental health to the system, while also enabling the basin to continue to be Australia's food bowl, and encourage healthy regional communities.

“The Murray Darling basin has 9500 hardworking, mainly family owned, irrigation business growing the things Australians love to eat, drink and wear. And those businesses generate tens of thousands of jobs in basin communities and throughout the economy.

“That’s why achieving the plans’ aims, in part, through investing in infrastructure, has a huge benefit.

“Over the last decade those businesses have become world leaders in water efficiency, they’ve taken the risks and they are integral to meeting basin plan objectives.”

**Further information Steve Whan 0429 780 883
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