

On the brink – Basin Plan needs bipartisan support

A vote in the Senate tomorrow to back Greens political point scoring and disallow basin plan amendments will blow up years of effort to restore the health of the Murray Darling.

National Irrigators' Council CEO, Steve Whan, says, "today NSW and Victoria have put their frustration on the table. They have worked with their communities now for years to implement the basin plan and they are telling us all very clearly that if their effort is going to be ignored, then they will no longer be a part of the basin plan.

"It's fine to have Opposition and Government negotiating over things they want clarified or to seek more assurance. That's the normal process of Government but when that all happens in a final week after years of effort it's no wonder the other participants wonder why they bother.

"NIC is aware that there have been meaningful discussions aimed at responding to Labor Opposition questions. On top of that, the industry and the NSW Government have made it very clear that they see Northern Basin compliance as critical and are willing to work cooperatively to resolve issues about legal use of environmental water.

"Our communities need certainty and none of our industry wants to see years more of fighting and point scoring.

"NIC is pleased there is now a workable relationship between the Opposition and basin governments to continue to resolve issues and on that basis we urge the Opposition to ensure the basin plan amendments are upheld.

"No one should be in any doubt about what the alternative is. In my discussions with those involved I am 100% sure that NSW and Victoria are not just making threats. Their communities are giving them a message that they cannot ignore.

"Over the past week we have seen some disgraceful Greens grandstanding, where they have made completely false claims cloaked in a language of division. In some tweets they have even blamed farmers for drought, a disgracefully ignorant claim, demonstrating they are clearly more interested in votes than the environment.

"The major parties must show the way on this. Bipartisanship is the only way to achieve the sort of real reform that the basin plan represents."

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