

Devastating Senate Decision Sets Environment Back Years

The National Irrigators Council says the decision by a majority of Senators to disallow the Basin Plan amendment relating to the northern basin is a huge blow to better environmental outcomes and now threatens the whole basin plan.

NIC CEO, Steve Whan said, "Senators have dealt a huge blow to small Northern Basin communities who have trusted a process agreed in a bipartisan act 5 years ago. Those communities have every right to be angry and disillusioned as their futures are sacrificed for politics.

"No one is surprised by the Greens moving this motion; they have never supported this plan and are happy to put votes before the environment.

"Their motion at the very least puts a stop on works to improve the health of northern basin rivers, vital measures like fishways and addressing cold water pollution.

"At worst it could sink the basin plan. That is not an outcome irrigators want but we certainly understand why Minister Blair who has undertaken a huge effort to address issues in a relatively short time frame would feel that this vote is a sign that politics has triumphed over outcomes.

"In justifying their positions today, Senators demonstrated a failure to properly acquaint themselves with the substantial amount of work that has been done since the middle of last year.

"Senators have rejected four years of hard work by the independent authority and more importantly by the communities in the Northern Basin.

"This makes for a very difficult time ahead for the Basin Plan. There is a serious danger of collapse. Despite our real dismay about this incredibly short sighted decision Irrigators don't want the plan to collapse. We want the positive environmental outcomes and want Australians to be able to get fresh food and locally grown fibre.

"If the Greens had their way Australians would get their vegies in imported tins. We know their attitude, but are devastated that Labor has joined this. Labor put this in place and they are starting to destroy their own achievement.

"This is outrageous politics and the environment and rural communities are the victims. It will take a big effort to recover the plan now."

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