

NIC Welcomes Regional Engagement Officers

National Irrigators' Council (NIC) CEO, Steve Whan today welcomed the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) decision to make the Regional Engagement Officer network a permanent feature.

NIC has long advocated for the placement of regional engagement officers in Basin communities to ensure that water related agencies are better equipped to provide a local presence with first-hand knowledge of the Basin and an understanding of the different needs of local communities.

"The decision of the MDBA to move from the regional engagement officer pilot program to make the initiative a permanent feature demonstrates a real commitment to ensure that the promised localism is hard wired into the Plan," Steve Whan said.

"The MDBA placement of the local engagement officers will complement the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH) regional engagement officers whose role is critical to being able to effectively manage and deliver Commonwealth environmental water.

"We all want to see real environment improvement from the basin plan and to get that, we need people who understand local communities and local rivers, people who can work with other locally based officials from the CEWH and the States to understand that environmental results are more than just ticking off flow targets.

"It is therefore equally critical that those with the responsibility of managing the waterways within the Basin are able to recognise, respect and respond to the needs of local communities and local environments.

"NIC would expect that this will help to ensure that the actual needs of rivers and their environment are addressed, knowing for instance how to engage communities in implementing complementary measures such as reducing pest species or local strategies to reconnect rivers for native fish.

"Local managers are able to tap into local knowledge and experience and establish the most appropriate mechanisms for consultation and feedback within communities."

"A local presence provides a conduit for more effective consultation and engagement to ensure sustainability for communities and to enable the irrigated agriculture sector to continue to do what they do best in providing food and fibre for domestic consumption and for Australia's export markets."

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