

Tuesday, 13 April 2010

Infrastructure funds for Queensland and NSW irrigators welcome

The National Irrigators' Council has welcomed the announcement of infrastructure funding for irrigation upgrades in Queensland and NSW which will help irrigators become more efficient in the face of anticipated water reductions in future.

Minister for Water, Penny Wong, today announced \$36 million for the first phase of the on-farm program in Queensland and \$162 million in the Macquarie Valley in NSW as part of the *Private Irrigation Infrastructure Operators Program*.

NIC CEO, Danny O'Brien, said the announcements were welcome as they would help deliver water for the environment, efficiency savings for irrigators and a legacy of more efficiency irrigation systems.

"Today's announcements of both on-farm and off-farm funds are a step in the right direction and a response to our calls for the Government to get the infrastructure programs rolling," Mr O'Brien said.

"Investment in more efficient irrigation infrastructure is a win-win because water saved through efficiency gains is shared between the environment and irrigators. More efficient irrigation systems also help provide lasting benefits to rural communities that rely on irrigation because they allow irrigators to maintain production with less water.

"It's important to understand that every megalitre saved for the environment through infrastructure investment or purchased from willing sellers will help reduce the impact on irrigators of anticipated reductions in water availability under new Sustainable Diversion Limits that will be part of the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

"The announcements today are an important further part of this adjustment mechanism and are recognition that government investment in irrigation infrastructure is an important part of the reform process.

"We are particularly pleased that Minister Wong has already rejected calls by the Productivity Commission to wind back infrastructure spending and we congratulate her for that.

"We are very pleased that these further announcements have been made and irrigators can get on with the job of getting works done on and off farm," said Mr O'Brien.

Mr O'Brien said the NIC would continue to work with its members and the government on the efficient implementation of these funding programs and looked forward to more announcements over coming days.

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