



# National Irrigators' Council

Level 2, NFF House, 14-16 Brisbane Ave  
Barton ACT 2600

Ph: 02 6273 3637  
ABN: 92133308326

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## **Growing irrigated agriculture business**

National Irrigators' Council has welcomed Federal Budget measures supporting irrigated agriculture business, building on the Government's \$4 billion Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper announced in mid-2015.

Council Chair Gavin McMahon said measures underpinning the sustainability of irrigated agriculture businesses through the easing of the tax burden for small business, a continuation of the Farm Management Deposits Scheme and the removal of regulatory burdens by the Government through the 2014-15 review of the Water Act, are critical for the sector.

"Irrigated agriculture producers need the right environment to grow their businesses to take advantage of trade and market access opportunities and to transition to latest technologies and modern farming practices," Mr McMahon said.

He said the newly announced \$2 billion National Water Infrastructure Loan Facility supporting major water infrastructure projects over ten years signals the Government's commitment to strengthen its plan for irrigated agriculture.

The Loan Facility follows the \$500 million National Water Infrastructure Development Fund designed to support the future development of water infrastructure including the construction of dams and/or pipelines, wastewater reuse and managed aquifer recharge.

The Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Program investment in rural water use, management and efficiency is a key mechanism to 'bridge the gap' to the sustainable diversion limits under the Murray Darling Basin Plan. The majority of funds are directed to projects in the Basin for improving the operation of off-farm delivery systems and help irrigators improve on-farm water use efficiency. The water savings from these projects go to both environmental use and irrigators for consumptive use, underpinning productivity and economic activity in regional communities.

Mr McMahon said the appointment of Mick Keogh in early 2016 as the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's first Agriculture Commissioner will strengthen the ACCC's capacity to understand and address potential anti-competitive issues in the sector.

"The recently announced \$15 million National Carp Control Plan to undertake scientific research, planning, community engagement and communications activities in the lead up to a release of the carp herpes virus is a necessary step," Mr McMahon said.

The Council has been vocal in its support for measures to control carp numbers in rivers and waterways which are impacting water quality and the habitat of native fish species.

"Irrigators will continue to support parallel measures to ensure the environmental health of the Murray Darling Basin, recognising that Basin Plan reforms should not focus solely on water as the only management tool, but must include a mix of measures equally focused on food and fibre production, the socio and economic outcomes for regional communities and the environment," Mr McMahon said.

### **Contact:**

Gavin McMahon: 0419 038 96