



National Irrigators' Council

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Irrigators cautiously welcome SDL stocktake

National Irrigators' Council CEO Tom Chesson today welcomed the Sustainable Diversion Limit (SDL) Adjustment Stocktake Report released by the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council.

Mr Chesson noted that while progress towards the SDL Adjustment Mechanism is in its early stages, he said the report will nevertheless be welcome news for the irrigated agriculture sector. The independent stocktake finds a supply contribution of around 500 gigalitres towards an outcome of up to 650 gigalitres under the SDL Adjustment Mechanism.

"It is important for our sector to understand in a transparent way how supply measure projects as part of the stocktake have been assessed and how the 500 gigalitre figure was reached. While there is further work to be completed on a number of projects put forward by the states, the stocktake serves as a progress report for communities and demonstrates the work underway to develop potential supply, efficiency and constraints measures.

"We would like to see sufficient flexibility around timelines that will enable examination of any additional project proposals to be submitted so that all possible supply contributions can be achieved. And we will remain vigilant to ensure that consultation occurs on proposals to identify any potential rules changes that may result in negative impacts," Mr Chesson said.

The National Irrigators' Council has long stressed that reforms under the Basin Plan should not focus solely on water as the only management tool and that solutions must incorporate a range of measures that give equal balance to food and fibre production, the environment and the socio and economic outcomes for communities.

"There is opportunity to maximise objectives through the building and/or upgrading of existing, environmental supply and efficiency measures, with a focus on projects under the localism model.

"Government investment in upgrading and modernising irrigation systems is building on efficient infrastructure, providing short and long stimulus and flow on benefits for communities. Water savings from infrastructure projects are shared and result in water being retained on farm contributing to direct employment in irrigated agriculture and potential downstream industry opportunities," he said.

Mr Chesson also welcomed the statement by the South Australian Water Minister who has today withdrawn his opposition to the federal government's legislation currently before the Australian parliament which provides for a 1500 gigalitre cap on water buybacks across the Basin.

"This is a significant step towards bipartisan support for a 1500 gigalitre cap. When legislated, the cap will represent an important signal to communities and provide a degree of longer term certainty for those who depend on the Basin's water resources.

"We look forward to ongoing consultation and opportunities to be briefed on progress on the supply measure projects towards the SDL Adjustment Mechanism," Mr Chesson said.

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<http://www.mdba.gov.au/sites/default/files/pubs/SDL-Adjustment-Stocktake-Report.pdf>