

Monday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2012

## **NIC submission calls for a balanced plan for the Murray Darling Basin**

The Chairman of the National Irrigators' Council (NIC), Stewart Ellis said his organisation, whilst willing to work with the Government, has rejected as unacceptable, the proposed Basin Plan.

Mr Ellis said the [NIC's submission](#) highlighted the major concerns irrigators had with the draft Basin Plan and said it was now up to the MDBA and the Government to take on board those concerns.

"Irrigators have been, and remain, committed to genuine reform. However, reform must take a sensible path that does not destroy communities and industries and maintains a viable, productive irrigated agriculture sector in the MDB.

"The NIC has found that the Draft Basin Plan in its current form is undeliverable and without changes there is the very real risk of catastrophic environmental, social and economic mistakes being made.

"The current trajectory of reform is too heavily biased towards water as the only management solution, and that the environment takes precedence over people, communities and food and fibre production.

"The National Irrigators' Council believes the Sustainable Diversion Limit (consumptive use) needs to be increased.

"There has been no justification for the massive social and economic dislocation the recovery of 2750 Gl/y of long term cap equivalent water will unleash on communities across the Murray Darling Basin.

"Nor has there been adequate explanation of how the water recovered for the environment will be used, where it will be used and for what purpose it will be used," Mr Ellis said.

Mr Ellis said the NIC believes water recovery targets should be consistent with the triple bottom line approach that values equally the social, environmental and economic health of MDB communities.

"We believe the 2015 review needs teeth to ensure its findings can be acted upon and the Review must take into consideration environmental, social and economic outcomes; localism and until the review has been completed and the Government has proven they need and can deliver the environmental water it already holds there should be a reverse onus of proof by limiting the volume of held entitlement that can be recovered.

"Priority should be given to works and measures and efficiency projects identified under the localism model.

"In addition water recovery should not just be focused on privately held water entitlement and must also look at operational efficiency of seventy percent of all water flows in the MDB already allocated to the environment," he said.

Mr Ellis concluded by saying the National Irrigators' Council will continue to work with the Basin States, the MDBA and the Commonwealth Government however we reserve the right to withdraw from the process if our concerns are not addressed and the social, environmental and economic fabric of our communities is placed in jeopardy by the Basin Plan.

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