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BUYBACK PLAN IS LONG TERM – WON'T ASSIST LOWER LAKES

The National Irrigators Council at its Annual General Meeting today expressed concern about Prime Minister Rudd's announcement that he will accelerate the Government's water buyback plan.

"The buyback was a 10 year plan designed to address a long term issue," Acting CEO Andrew Gregson said

"Buying water entitlements that have no water attached to them through a drought will not solve a short term issue. What it will do is utterly devastate the future of rural and regional communities that rely on irrigation.

"Buying entitlement is not buying water. It is buying a share in a resource for when that resource becomes available. That is, buying a share in rain when it comes. That is a medium to long term solution – it won't assist the Lower Lakes.

"Regional communities, the Australian economy and those interested in our nation's food security should share the National Irrigators' Council concern about a knee-jerk reaction driven by loud minority groups.

Mr Gregson noted that the Council was equally concerned about acidification of the Lower Lakes as environmental groups, but was far more realistic in assessing options to deal with the problem.

"This is a drought – a bad one. Fresh water simply isn't available. All options need to be considered to deal with the pending acidification."