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## Committees must examine engineering solutions

Parliamentary inquiries into the management of the Murray Darling Basin can help governments to deliver water to the environment by helping to identify innovative engineering works and measures.

The National Irrigators' Council has lodged its submissions to the House of Representatives and Senate committees, highlighting the fact that engineering solutions to provide more efficient environmental watering must play a role in delivering a triple bottom line outcome in the Basin Plan.

NIC CEO, Danny O'Brien, said consideration of the Water Act and recognition that politicians, not technocrats, must have the final say were also critical issues for the Committees to address.

"First of all, the Committees need to understand that the problems in the Murray Darling are not simply solved by just adding water. This is a complex problem and the answers are not simple.

"We believe that environmental works and measures will be a critical component of improving the health of some environmental assets and it is incumbent on the Committees to investigate the options and present worthy projects to the Government to consider."

Mr O'Brien said NIC was working with State Governments and other organisations to help develop a list of projects that could save water and deliver environmental outcomes while reducing the need to cut water from irrigation communities.

"For example, the Victorian Government has a proposal to install a weir on the Lindsay River and eight smaller regulators to retain water on the Lindsay Island floodplain for about \$36 million. These works would enable flooding of about 5,000 hectares and reduce the amount of environmental water required for each event from 1,200,000 ML to 90,000 ML.

"These are enormous savings that need to be considered. They may not be perfect for the environment, but to quote Tony Windsor they can provide a 'better-better' outcome, and that's what we are all trying to achieve."

Mr O'Brien said the Committees also needed to advise the Parliament that:

- The *Water Act 2007* does not deliver a triple bottom line outcome and should be amended. Failure to amend the Act could result in legal challenges against any final plan.
- The "best available science" is of at-best medium quality and advice from the MDBA should only form a part of the decision-making process.

"A balanced outcome cannot simply be about how much more water is needed for the environment. A balanced outcome will entail consideration of the best available science along with the views of affected stakeholders before a judgement call from elected politicians – it cannot be delivered as a definitive technical answer from the MDBA," Mr O'Brien concluded.

The submissions are available online at [www.irrigators.org.au](http://www.irrigators.org.au).

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