

Friday, 28 January 2011

Irrigators welcome appointment of new MDBA chair

The National irrigators' Council has welcomed the appointment of Craig Knowles to the position of Chair of the Murray Darling Basin Authority and urged him to do everything in his powers to develop a Basin Plan that delivers a triple bottom line outcome.

NIC CEO, Danny O'Brien, said Mr Knowles was known in water circles for his work on the National Water Initiative, an agreement among all governments that ensured equal treatment of environmental, economic and social factors when it comes to water planning.

"We are not opposed to the Basin Plan but we want to see one that adequately balances the needs of the environment with those of people, food and fibre production and communities. The Guide to the proposed Plan patently fails in that area. As it currently stands, the proposal would cost thousands of jobs, force up food prices and threaten family farms and regional communities.

"One of Mr Knowles' first jobs should be to scrap the Guide and commit to a new round of genuine engagement with Basin communities to get the Plan right.

"Mr Knowles has an opportunity to help craft a Plan that provides the balance that all are seeking and we hope that he will understand that the MDBA can only provide part of the solution.

"It is our view that decisions on water sharing in the Basin are too important and complex to be left to technocrats – particularly when directed by a flawed *Water Act* - elected politicians must be prepared to make a judgement call. To that end, the appointment of an ex-politician to the role of MDBA Chair is a sound one.

"Mr Knowles has experience in the corridors of power and he also knows how to deal with difficult political decisions.

"He is known to many of our members from his time as Water Minister in NSW and is generally respected. We look forward to working with him to provide the necessary balance that we are all seeking."

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