

Friday 29th June, 2012

Basin Ministerial Council Meeting Raises More Questions than it Answers

Today's meeting [Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council](#) has done little to allay irrigators concerns and has raised more questions than it has answered.

The CEO of the National Irrigators' Council, Tom Chesson said he was surprised that the Ministers had agreed to another round of modelling for the proposed Basin Plan when the majority of State Governments had expressed concern that 2750 GL/y would inflict terrible social and economic pain on their communities.

"If the Basin State Governments are demanding the MDBA go and model 3,200 GL/y reduction, they should also be demanding they re-do the social and economic modelling used by the MDBA.

"The MDBA's social and economic modelling has been shown to be based on biased assumptions that ensure that the modelling outcomes are ones that neatly align with the intent of the proposed Basin Plan and allow the Commonwealth Government to downplay the damage that everyone knows will be done to farming communities throughout the Basin.

"Whilst they are at it, perhaps the MDBA might wish to comment on why the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder has failed to use over half of the 1300 GL of water it had allocated to it during the last water year?

"If the Government can't use the water it has in a wet year, how can it claim that it needs to take more water from communities?

"We do welcome the fact that the Ministerial Council has 'requested officials to undertake further work on a methodology for measuring environmental outcomes. Ministers also asked the Authority to continue to develop an SDL adjustment mechanism through which environmental works and measures could be counted as reductions against held water for the purposes of bridging the gap ..."

Mr Chesson said irrigators and their communities are fast losing patience, as highlighted by the rally in Griffith on Wednesday, and Governments of all persuasions need to understand implicitly that they are not prepared to be traded-off to support some form of scientific and public policy experiment.

"We can compromise only so far," he said.

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