

Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> June, 2012

## **MDB Communities Rally in Griffith for a Balanced Plan**

The National Irrigators' Council said it was not surprised communities were again rallying in Griffith.

The CEO of the National Irrigators' Council (NIC), Tom Chesson said many communities right up and down the Murray Darling Basin felt they were being ignored and their anger was white hot.

"It's not just communities directly affected who should be worried. The proposed Basin Plan will cost thousands of jobs, put increased pressure on food prices, and threaten family farms and regional communities.

"If the proposed Basin Plan is adopted in its current form the Parliament will be responsible for:

- Economically and socially destroying communities that are at the centre of Australia's food and fibre industries and upon which an increasingly hungry world will depend
- Failing to deliver on a promise of a balanced plan which ensures Basin communities can continue to look forward to strong and vibrant futures
- Offering no solutions to problems of invasive fish species, riparian vegetation, urban pollution, cold-water pollution etc;
- Ignoring the people who live in the Basin while supposedly seeking to partner with them through a process the MDBA is calling 'localism';
- Causing flooding events which will have the potential to damage infrastructure.

"The NIC has found that the Draft Basin Plan is currently undeliverable and without changes there is the very real risk of catastrophic environmental, social and economic mistakes being made," Mr Chesson said.

"If this proposed Basin Plan is adopted, the MDBA's own modelling has concluded communities in the Murrumbidgee, NSW Murray, Northern Victoria, Sunraysia, Lower Balonne and the South Australian Riverland will be forced back into a man-made drought.

"Independent Economics has found, using the MDBA's own models, that 2100 jobs will be lost in the South West Murrumbidgee region alone.

Mr Chesson said the current trajectory of reform is too heavily biased towards water as the only management solution, and that the environment is being given absolute precedence over people, communities and food and fibre production.

"The National Irrigators' Council believes the Sustainable Diversion Limit (consumptive use) can be increased without detriment to the environment through a more strategic approach to environmental watering and river management.

"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.

"Basin communities have today roundly rejected the proposed Basin Plan and the headline recovery figure of 2750 GL/y. The only way forward is for the Government to work on ways of delivering environmental outcomes needed through efficiencies, environmental works and measures and infrastructure which would result in a more balanced plan," Mr Chesson said.

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