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CSIRO Economic Analysis Missing In Action

The National Irrigators' Council (NIC) is calling on the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) to release the promised multiple benefit study being conducted by the CSIRO to provide stakeholders time to analyse its findings.

NIC CEO, Tom Chesson, said the MDBA had rightly recognised that more work needed to be done on valuing the benefits of the Basin Plan and held the CSIRO project up as addressing the shortfall.

"Last November the MDBA released a social and economic analysis that recognised 'inherent' limitations in existing work on the benefits of the Basin Plan but said the CSIRO project was underway to improve knowledge," Mr Chesson said.

"Four months later and we are still waiting.

"How will stakeholders have time to analyse the findings of this study before the close of the submission period.

"More importantly, how will the MDBA have time to analyse the study and consider its findings in the preparation of the final Basin Plan.

"The MDBA are continuing on their merry way, preparing the Basin Plan with incomplete socio-economic analysis based on the presumption that the benefits of the Basin Plan outweigh the costs.

"But most of those 'benefits' are what is called 'non-use' values which to put in laymen's terms is that nice feeling you get when you think of a free flowing Murray River and has absolutely nothing to do with economic productivity or community wellbeing," Mr Chesson said.

The NIC encourage MDBA Board Member Diana Gibbs to make good on her promise that more economic studies would be released.

MS Gibbs reportedly told [ABC News](#) in January that she had ordered more economic studies and more work that hadn't been made public would be "coming on stream" in February – which has now passed with no economic studies released.

"It is time the MDBA was upfront and provided us all the information they have – even if it is in draft form – so we can judge for ourselves if there are benefits to be had from stripping productivity out of our regional communities," Mr Chesson said.

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