

Monday 28th May, 2012

Proposed Basin Plan will cost jobs and rob communities of a future

Five months ago the National Irrigators' Council (NIC) said the draft Basin Plan was unacceptable. Today's release of the next stage of the proposed Basin Plan has done nothing to curtail that view.

Chairman of the NIC, Gavin McMahon, said 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 Minister will be responsible for:

- Economically and socially destroying communities reliant on water for their survival;
- Failing to deliver on a promise of a balanced plan which takes into consideration equally social, environmental and economic outcomes;
- 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, and making a mockery of the idea of 'localism';
- Causing flooding events which will have the potential to damage infrastructure.

Mr McMahon said irrigators want a healthy river system – we rely on it – but we want a balanced plan that considers the needs of people, communities and food and fibre production as well as the environment.

"Despite the Commonwealth Budget papers indicating it will have recovered over 2519 GL/y (LTCE) since 2004, it does not have a long term watering plan in place to detail how that water is to be used.

"The NIC has previously raised concerns that there is no environmental watering plan in the proposed Basin Plan and as nothing has changed still begs the question of how the Government has come up with any number when it doesn't know and won't know for at least another three years how, when, where, why or what it wants to water?"

"When communities up and down the Basin see the latest proposed Basin Plan has no change to the 2750 GL/y recovery target, they will be wondering why they wasted so much time and effort in engaging with the MDBA to ensure we ended up with a Basin Plan which was grounded in reality, was achievable and delivered on a triple bottom line, where equal weighting was given to social, environmental and economic issues.

"This does not bode well for 'localism' if local community input is going to be ignored."

Mr McMahon said communities would be looking to their State and Federal Governments to inject a dose of reality into the proposed Basin Plan.

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