

Friday 3rd February, 2012

NIC Pays Tribute to Inaugural Chairman

The National Irrigators' Council said irrigators have lost a statesman with the sudden resignation of its inaugural Chairman, Stewart Ellis.

Mr Ellis is an honest broker who has done what many thought impossible and has brought together for the first time since Federation irrigators from around the country and particularly across the Murray Darling Basin.

The NIC could not have asked for more in its inaugural Chair who brought patience, perseverance, balance and a deep knowledge and commitment to advancing Australian agriculture.

Stewart was a frontline environmentalist who sought to bring years of practical experience to the table in what has been an emotive and at times ignorant debate over consumptive water use in Australia.

Gavin McMahon, the NICs' Deputy Chair and CEO of South Australia's largest irrigation infrastructure corporation, the Central Irrigation Trust (CIT) will become the Acting-Chair at a crucial time for irrigators and their communities as the Government gets down to the business end of finalising the MDB Basin Plan.

Mr McMahon said he believed irrigators and their committees needed a strong voice in Canberra and the NIC will continue to be that voice fighting for a sensible, balanced, deliverable MBD Plan.

"Whilst the Murray Darling Basin Plan is taking up so much of our time and is at the forefront of the political debate, there are a number of other issues affecting irrigators around the country.

"A key concern is the rapidly escalating cost of energy."

Mr McMahon said for example CIT estimates the annual electricity bill for the Waikerie Pumping Station, which sends water to about 175 farms, has jumped from \$202,000 in 2009 to an estimated \$385,000 in 2013 - a 90 per cent rise - much of which is passed on to irrigators.

"These are the types of issues we are grappling with on a daily basis and we will continue to push our Members concerns at the highest levels of Government," Mr McMahon said.

Media Contact: Tom Chesson 0418 415597