

No balance in Basin Plan, say peak agricultural groups

Peak agricultural industry groups from across the Murray-Darling Basin believe that the proposed Murray-Darling Basin Plan, released this morning by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, has failed to achieve the promised balance between social, economic and environmental impacts.

The collective industry bodies, including the National Farmers' Federation (NFF), National Irrigators Council, AgForce Queensland, Queensland Farmers' Federation, NSW Irrigators Council, NSW Farmers Association, Victorian Farmers' Federation, Australian Dairy Farmers, Cotton Australia and the Ricegrowers' Association of Australia, represented by NFF Chief Executive Officer Matt Linnegar, say the result is disappointing.

"For nearly a decade we've been promised balance between social, economic and environmental impacts," Mr Linnegar said.

"The Guide last year did not deliver that balance – and now, after another twelve months, the draft has also failed to live up to promises made.

"It is very disappointing for industry groups across the Murray-Darling Basin that our concerns about the Plan have not been taken into account. For the communities, the family farms and the local businesses across the Basin, the result is more than disappointing – their very futures are on the line.

"We have said, and said consistently, that the Basin Plan needs to be about outcomes, not numbers.

"The 2,750 gigalitres contained in the Plan, plus the water historically set aside for the environment, means the environment has a significant amount of water at its disposal. The impact of this will be job losses, closure of family farms, hardships for regional communities and increases in fresh food prices.

"This should be about outcomes: about achieving a healthy environment, vibrant communities and prosperous regional economies. All three of these outcomes are equally essential, and the Plan must not achieve environmental outcomes at the expense of the economic and social outcomes.

"It's up to Minister Burke to intervene to deliver a balanced Plan," Mr Linnegar said.

Ends.

Media, please note: a joint agricultural industry press conference will be held in the Senate Courtyard at Parliament House at 12:30pm today in response to the release of the proposed Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

For more information or interviews, contact:

Ruth Redfern, NFF on 0408 448 250; Tom Chesson, National Irrigator's Council on 0418 415 597; Jane Patterson, AgForce on 0418 733 102; Brad Pfeffer, QFF on 0417 626 420; Olivia Suzanski, NSW Farmers Association on 0429 990 218; Andrew Gregson, NSW Irrigators Council on 0416 884 468; David Cumming, VFF on 0417 165 784; Natalie Collard, Australian Dairy Farmers on 03 8621 4200; David Bone, Cotton Australia on 0488 189 502; and Ruth Wade from Ricegrowers' Association on 0417 752 299.

