

Friday 30th November, 2012

No Rest for the 'Wicked'

The National Irrigators' Council (NIC) said the future of the Nations' food bowl was resting on the implementation of Murray Darling Basin Plan and unless it was properly resourced it could become a complete shambles.

"Today the MDB Ministers are meeting in Canberra to discuss the finer details of the Intergovernmental Agreement, including funding," NIC CEO, Tom Chesson said.

"Over \$12 billion has been allocated to write the Basin Plan and recover 2750GL/y of water, yet the Regulatory Impact Statement highlights the Commonwealth Government is proposing to spend less than 1 per cent of that per annum implementing and delivering the Basin Plan.

"The issues in the Basin have been described as 'wicked' problems because they are so complex."

"Donald Rumsfeld could easily have been describing the management of the MDB when he said; *'There are known knowns. These are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns. That is to say, there are things that we know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns. There are things we don't know we don't know.'*

"Scientists don't come cheap and taxpayers should brace themselves because there are still plenty of known unknown in the MDB."

"For example just metering and monitoring the use of environmental water to ensure that the billions of dollars of taxpayers' funds invested in the Basin Plan are not being wasted will cost millions of dollars per annum."

Mr Chesson said irrigators understand taxpayers' dollars are scarce and where possible existing resources should be used.

"For example the Ministerial Council should canvas whether the Murray Darling Basin Authority is delivering services as efficiently as possible and whether some of its functions can be contracted out.

Mr Chesson said NIC is urging State Governments to ensure that there is adequate funding and resources in place to implement the Basin Plan and that outstanding issues are resolved before they sign up the Intergovernmental Agreement.

"We do not want the cost of government policy borne by MDB communities.

"With the media and political attention already waning, it will become increasingly difficult in the future for community concerns with the implementation of the Basin Plan to be heard and acted upon.

"We do not want to be in a situation where Governments are announcing another 'historic' reform of the MDB in a few years' time because the implementation of this 'historic' Basin Plan was ill-thought out and under-resourced."

"It is imperative that we get it right now," he said.

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