

Saturday, 6 November 2010

Irrigators welcome Victorian food bowl funds

The National Irrigators' Council has welcomed the Commonwealth Government's announcement confirming its \$1 billion commitment to the upgrade of northern Victoria's irrigation infrastructure.

NIC CEO, Danny O'Brien said investments of this type were critical to enabling a strong future for irrigation districts and would help in achieving the balance necessary in the proposed Murray Darling Basin Plan.

"Investments to improve the efficiency of irrigation infrastructure are a win-win. They provide more water for the environment and they allow farmers to keep producing at the same rate with less water.

"That has a significant flow-on benefit for the wider community because it means there is the same amount of product – milk, wine, fruit, grains – going through local packing sheds, factories and processing plants and that means jobs and prosperity for regional communities.

"This is the biggest project yet announced under the Commonwealth's \$5.8 billion program of investments, and while it has been a long-time coming – more than two years – it is very welcome.

"It's now time for the Commonwealth to roll out more of these programs, including the remaining state priority projects that were committed to in 2008.

"Announcements such as these will re-assure communities that are fearful about the impacts of the Basin Plan that the government does believe in their future and is prepared to invest to achieve a balance between the needs of the environment and the needs of food production and rural communities.

"Infrastructure investments are far more preferable to direct buy-back which drains the local community of wealth.

"While the former will be more expensive in the short-term, the longer term implications are far better for regional communities, for governments and all Australians."

Media Contact: Danny O'Brien (02) 6273 3637 or 0438 130 445