

Wednesday, 14 October 2010

Irrigators welcome Parliamentary review of Basin Plan impacts

The National Irrigators' Council has welcomed the announcement of a Parliamentary inquiry into the social and economic impacts of the proposed Murray Darling Basin Plan but says its terms of reference must allow it to examine the *Water Act 2007* and consider amendments.

NIC CEO Danny O'Brien said the inquiry announced today by Ministers Crean, Burke and Ludwig was a welcome opportunity for the Parliament to properly consider the impacts on jobs, communities, family farms and food production.

"The response of the communities of Shepparton, Deniliquin and Griffith so far this week should leave the Government and the Parliament in no doubt about the level of concern in Basin communities about the proposals to removal more than a third of water from the productive pool.

"The guide released last week clearly would cost thousands of jobs, force up food prices and threaten family farms.

"The most significant outcome of this week's public information sessions has been the repeated statements by the Authority that its hands are tied by a Water Act that doesn't allow it to adequately consider a triple bottom line approach.

"We have always said that the Act doesn't get the balance right and this has been repeatedly confirmed by the MDBA itself this week. The inquiry offers an excellent opportunity for the Parliament to revisit the Act and get an outcome that delivers for all – the environment, regional communities and food production."

Mr O'Brien said with the inquiry not scheduled to report until the end of April, it is now incumbent on the MDBA to suspend further work on the proposed basin plan and wait for the Parliament to have its say.

"It would be pointless proceeding to the next stage until the Parliament considers the impacts of the Basin Plan and makes its recommendations."

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