

Tuesday, 6 October 2009

Irrigators eager to get rolling with on-farm efficiency works

The National Irrigators' Council (NIC) has welcomed the release of guidelines for the Commonwealth's \$300 million On-farm Irrigation Efficiency program saying it was time the Commonwealth started to focus more on infrastructure upgrades.

NIC CEO Danny O'Brien said the On-farm Irrigation Efficiency Program would help irrigators improve their farms while providing water for the environment.

"Investing in irrigation infrastructure upgrades is the best way of finding water for our rivers and streams because it actually invests in the capacity of irrigators to provide food and fibre for the nation.

"Infrastructure investment is a win-win situation as it leads to better efficiency throughout irrigation systems, helps drive jobs and the economy of many regional towns and cities, while at the same time sharing water savings with the environment.

"Irrigators have been calling for these works to get rolling for some time and we are pleased that Minister Wong has released the guidelines today. We are concerned however that applications close for the program on 17 November giving applicants little more than a month to submit their projects. We hope the government is prepared to be flexible if necessary.

"We now look forward to working with the government to ensure projects can be developed and approved as quickly as possible."

Mr O'Brien said the NIC would be encouraging members and member organisations to put forward proposals for the program.

"Irrigators are suffering through the worst drought in history and they are keen to get involved in the program and get major works happening on farm.

"It is disappointing that this announcement has taken so long but it is welcome nonetheless. We urge state governments to get cracking on the priority projects that they want Commonwealth funding for. It is well over 12 months now since the states and Commonwealth signed the intergovernmental agreement on water reform and the patience of irrigators is wearing thin."

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