

## Irrigators tell Basin Ministers to deliver not quiver

Murray Darling Basin water Ministers face a crucial test when they meet in Brisbane on Tue 17 December says the National Irrigators' Council (NIC).

NIC CEO, Steve Whan says “the meeting will be a real test for Ministers, they can either choose parochialism and short-term electoral gain, or they can commit to work together to get the Basin Plan and water management back on track.”

NIC [has written to Basin Ministers](#) ahead of the meeting setting out the issues it expects to be addressed.

Steve Whan said “we have taken the unusual step of releasing [our letter](#) to Ministers because, frankly, we are worried.

“There are real issues in that must be addressed. That includes – but is not limited to - Basin Plan implementation, the long-standing arrangements on allocation as well as impacts on water markets and river operations largely due to severe drought.

“NIC supports the Inspector General investigating impact of changing inflows in the southern Basin. He brings fresh eyes to a complex issues. His findings will be recommendations to the States (not actual changes) – which NIC would hope are considered with open minds.

“On the Basin Plan we strongly advocate implementing the Productivity Commission’s five-year Basin Plan review recommendations. These should be the basis for dealing with some of the very difficult issues in Basin Plan implementation. Disappointingly, the response from COAG was underwhelming. We again strongly urge action on these recommendations.

“A pressing issue for our members is lack of progress on supply measures. These are the 36 projects that should deliver the equivalent of 605GL of benefit to the environment. If these projects are not delivered by 2024 then irrigation communities face the threat of buyback of water and a billion-dollar hit on their local economies.

“Government is responsible for getting these projects up, they are their projects. It is unacceptable to have responsibility with Government; but cost of failure falling on communities. We must see real commitment, real progress and maximum flexibility in design and implementation of these projects.

“Ministers need to stand up for communities that are hurting, communities that signed up in good faith to reforms. We expect support for those communities. But at the same time Ministers must think about the long-term by working to resolve the problems and not push them on to the next Government.”

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