



National Irrigators' Council

Food · Fibre · Future

MEDIA RELEASE

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10 Years of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan & State of the Climate Report

The National Irrigators' Council acknowledges the release of the State of the Climate report which timely coincides with the 10 year anniversary of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

NIC CEO Isaac Jeffrey said: "The Murray-Darling Basin Plan has delivered ninety-eight percent of its surface water targets and over ninety percent of its groundwater targets. It has seen environmental water delivering fish and bird breeding events throughout the system. It rightly prioritises human needs, like drinking water and bathing, above the environment and the productive sector through the allocations process. It's been a challenging journey, but it's working and has delivered.

"The State of the Climate report released today paints a confronting picture of our climate future, with more extreme weather events, such as torrential rain, bushfires, droughts, rising temperatures, and increased intensity storms and rainfall. These events will have a devastating impact on food and fibre production, on local communities and the environment, and this impact needs to be assessed not just from an environmental standpoint, but from a food security and economic perspective.

"As we celebrate ten years of the Basin Plan and all it has achieved, and turn our thoughts towards finalising and reviewing the Plan, it is fundamentally important that science, such as the State of the Climate report, is considered. It is equally important that the impacts of our changing climate are assessed and evaluated for the environment, but also for our communities, economy, and food production and security.

"In finalising the Plan and preparing for its future, we need to consider the world leading water and farm management practices employed in Australia and the exemplary quality of the food and fibre we produce – and whether we would prefer to have Australian made and grown produce on our backs and dining tables. We need to consider the impact of change on jobs, on trade and on our economy. And, we need to consider the cost of living flow on effects of decisions and events which impact food and fibre production.

"With increased risks and water security concerns, governments need to urgently invest in water storage and improvements, including works to deepen dams and raise dam walls to limit evaporation, increase volumes and mitigate floods. Dams store water not just for the productive sector providing some security for food and fibre growth, but also to keep the rivers healthy and connected, and to deliver environmental outcomes.

"If further water recovery occurs, pushing producers and jobs out of the system, it will mean less food and fibre is grown. Increased climate risk increases the chances that some of the remaining production will be lost. These scenarios only lead to food insecurity and higher cost of living – and must be avoided. There are better ways.

"We should celebrate the wins of the Basin Plan and thank the regional communities which have sacrificed so much to make it a reality. We need to work together to finalise the Plan and to consider the future of the Plan to ensure it can continue to deliver food security and economic benefits, environmental outcomes and thriving local communities."

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