

## Cautious Optimism Welcomed from Basin Water Ministers' Meeting

National Irrigators' Council (NIC) CEO, Steve Whan, says he welcomes the cautious optimism Basin Water Ministers seem to be expressing following their meeting in Mildura on Friday.

Steve Whan said "with some rapidly approaching deadlines, irrigators and Basin communities still have a long way to go before they can feel secure about their futures, however Friday's meeting does appear to have taken a few positive steps.

"That's appropriate for a meeting held in a city which proudly boasts of being 'Australia's first irrigation colony'.

"NIC urged Ministers to focus on outcomes not just water targets and we were pleased to have been able to join with farmers & local Government in making that point to Ministers at their stakeholder round table.

"We also strongly emphasised the need for the community impact test associated with the 450GL of so called Up Water to be broadened to consider whole community impacts rather than impact on a single property owner. It is very pleasing to see that Ministers have taken steps down that path by agreeing to undertake independent work on how community impact should be assessed.

"Work done by the Victorian and NSW Governments seems to have made a very positive contribution to the community impact debate.

"Comments made by the Ministers after the meeting also appear to give grounds for cautious optimism on the capacity to deliver a full suite of projects to achieve the equivalent of 650GL in offsets. That would mean no further water would need to be purchased from farmers to achieve the plan's 2750GL target – again very welcome, and critical if basin communities are to avoid further detrimental reduction in productive capacity.

"There remains several important issues which don't appear to have progressed much at this meeting. That includes complementary measures, dealing with system constraints and structural adjustment.

"Implementing the Basin Plan is complicated and it will remain a contentious work in progress for some years, but it is good to see a productive result from this Ministers' meeting."

**Media Contact: Steve Whan 0429 780 883**  
**Monday 20 March 2017**