

NIC Welcomes Government's Water Commitments

CEO of the National Irrigators' Council (NIC), Steve Whan, says the organisation welcomes the Turnbull/Joyce Government's ongoing commitment to the contribution irrigated agricultural production can make to Australia's economic prosperity.

Steve Whan said "the 2017 budget has met the commitments the Government has made with funding for water related programs, including resourcing for Commonwealth agencies involved in water and infrastructure investment.

"What is particularly good though, is to have a Deputy Prime Minister who stands up at a budget breakfast and says he wants people to '***understand you get a multiple increase in agricultural production with irrigation.***'

"It is vital that the Australian community has an appreciation of how much of the export growth to Asia, that we hear so much about, is driven by agricultural productivity and how important irrigated agriculture is to that.

"Fruit, vegetables and dairy are three of the areas that will see massive demand increase from Asia, demand Australia can help satisfy, with an efficient, sustainable and growing irrigation industry.

"This budget's allocations reflect commitments to ongoing funding announced mid-year to Commonwealth water agencies, including the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, Murray Darling Basin Authority and Bureau of Meteorology.

"The budget reiterates the commitment made to funding associated with the Murray Darling Basin plan. That's particularly important for infrastructure and it is very good that a non-flow measure in the Carp Control program continues to be funded.

"We look forward to seeing much more progress on other non-flow measures including cold water pollution, improving fish migration through fish-ways, restoration of native fish habitat and feral animal and weed control in wetlands and riparian areas.

"Importantly the budget continues funding commitments for infrastructure within and outside the Murray Darling Basin and it meets an election commitment to establish a Regional Investment Corporation to administer the \$2 billion National Water Infrastructure Loan facility.

"NIC's other area of strong interest is in seeing positive national leadership on energy. Irrigators are hard hit by massive electricity prices because many pump and pressurise water to be more water efficient.

"This budget makes positive commitments to greater scrutiny by energy regulators and in availability of natural gas, a focus in both areas is welcome, though there is clearly a long way to go."

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