

Terms of Reference for Community Impact Study Welcome

The National Irrigators Council (NIC) says, meeting the promise that there would be no negative community impact is critical, if the so called 'up-water' component of the Basin Plan is to be delivered, and that makes Friday's release by the Deputy Prime Minister of terms of reference for an independent study, an important step.

NIC CEO, Steve Whan, said "when then Prime Minister Gillard joined then Minister Burke to announce a plan that included provision for an additional 450GL in so called 'up-water' efficiency savings, their statement was very clear. The water could only be delivered to the environment if it had a beneficial, or at least no negative, community impact.

"Unfortunately when the plan was actually put in place the test became whether or not an individual is willing to accept funding – a single property test. Very clearly that is not a test of impact on neighbours, on the viability of irrigation systems or on jobs and the welfare of the broader local community.

"It doesn't meet the promise. And it is completely out of step with the standard demanded when major city based industries face structural adjustment.

"NIC is very pleased to see that Basin water Ministers have recognised, that, for the promise to be met, more work needs to be done to ensure that any taxpayers money spent securing the 450GL of up-water produces benefits (or at the least no negative) for the community as well as the environment.

"I welcome the release of the terms of reference and look forward to work getting underway.

"It was pleasing to see South Australian Minister Hunter suggest this study and to see the Deputy Prime Minister moving it forward.

"I would hope that the bipartisanship demonstrated by state ministers in agreeing to these terms of reference will be reflected at Federal level as well. If the Gillard /Burke promise is to be honoured then there must be a bipartisan recognition that it would be unacceptable to put in place a scheme which further damages Basin communities."

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