

Friday Should See Crucial Next Step on Basin Plan

Friday's meeting of Murray Darling Basin Ministers should see a crucial next step toward implementation of the Basin Plan says National Irrigators' Council (NIC) CEO, Steve Whan.

Steve Whan said "the Basin Plan obviously has contentious elements and there is now substantial evidence to show that water buybacks have had very negative impacts on Basin communities. Friday's meeting contains a critical step in potentially achieving 650 GL of the Basin Plan's target without negative impacts on communities.

"The Basin Plan as agreed by the Parliament and all Basin States includes provision for up to 650 GL of the target to consist of supply or efficiency measures notified by 30 June 2017.

"These measures have been known as down water and they are a critical part of achieving the Basin Plan's initial target without inflicting further pain on basin communities.

"NIC expects that Friday's MinCo will give the go ahead for the assessment of the measures proposed by the States.

"It might not seem like a big deal but it is a critical step on the way to achieving the Basin Plan and if it doesn't happen it could put the brakes on the process entirely.

"NIC would also hope Ministers might discuss and come to some agreement on the Northern Basin Review, the assessment by the MDBA shows that the proposed changes from this review have no measurable impact on the Southern Basin and South Australia and they have no impact on achieving environmental objectives.

"The socio-economic assessment by the MDBA in the Northern Basin showed that taking water from productive use had conclusively hurt communities with hundreds of families affected by job losses. Irrigators didn't get all we wanted out the Northern Basin review but it is certainly better than the status quo.

"NIC is not anticipating much other than progress reporting on the socio-economic studies recently commenced as part of the Basin Plan's up-water provisions.

"It should be made absolutely clear that adjusting the SDL target in the Northern Basin and looking at the way Up-Water might be delivered is entirely consistent with the Plan as agreed by Parliament in 2012."

Media Contact: Steve Whan 0429 780 883
Wednesday 14 June 2017