

Basin Ministers in Agreement - Good for Community & Environment

Basin Ministers emerged from their meeting today smiling and in agreement, sending a very positive signal to Basin communities that it is now possible to deliver the basin plan with no more buybacks in the Southern basin and a reduced recovery target in the Northern Basin.

National Irrigators' Council, CEO Steve Whan said "Basin water Ministers appear to have achieved something, today, that looked very difficult only a year ago. Reaching an agreement on Sustainable Diversion Limit (SDL) adjustment measures – the so called 'down water', and on the Northern Basin Review.

"The NIC also welcomes the fact that [the Ministers' communique](#) is now making strong commitments to pursue the sort of complementary measures that our organisation has been advocating.

"This meeting saw a tick for supply measures, as a part of the 650 GL SDL adjustments, to be submitted to the MDBA, be assessed and for the planning to start for implementation over the next seven years.

"NIC was told by a number of Ministers that they strongly emphasised the need for consultation with stakeholders and communities during their discussions, and I welcome the fact that there is room to work through the design and implementation with those who feel they could be impacted.

"Most importantly, this decision gives irrigators and irrigation communities confidence and some certainty, that they will not be asked to give up more productive water to meet the rest of the 2750 GL target. That was the clear alternative and it was an unacceptable alternative.

"The Ministers' communique says, *'the latest advice has provided Ministers with a high level of confidence that the final SDL Adjustment Mechanism outcome, combined with remaining contracted water recovery projects, will be sufficient to fully offset the remaining water recovery 'gap' in the southern Basin'*.

"That should be greeted as very good news by the irrigation communities in the Southern Murray Darling basin.

"The positive news **for Northern Basin communities** is in the Ministers agreement to the reduction in the water recovery requirement in the Northern basin, from 390 GL to 320 GL, as recommended, following extensive scientific research, by the MDBA.

"320 GL will still not be an easy target for the Northern Basin. 278 GL has been recovered so far and that has produced, proven, negative social and economic

impacts. In some towns, the impact already has been 11 times worse than impact on Adelaide of the closure of Holden manufacturing.

“Any further recovery will produce more pain for those communities and the pain is very focused in some valleys – however the 70 GL reduction in the target is positive and the Ministerial Council’s support is welcome. Crucially, the 70 GL reduction has been scientifically assessed by the MDBA as making no real difference to environmental outcomes or to water in the Southern Basin.

“We would urge Federal Members of Parliament to follow the Basin Ministers’ lead when the Northern Basin Review is tabled in Parliament.

“Today’s outcomes include a number of items that the NIC and its members have lobbied hard to see achieved, and that is great news, but there is still a lot of work to do to see a Basin Plan finally implemented that will achieve the triple bottom line outcome irrigators have always advocated.”

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