

Irrigators urge Parliament to support MDBA Northern Basin recommendation

The National Irrigators Council (NIC) has urged Parliament to adopt Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) recommendations from of the Northern Basin Review (NBR) which have been presented to the Minister.

NIC CEO Steve Whan said “the Northern Basin Review was a thorough process, it proceeded as agreed when the plan received bipartisan support in 2012.

“The outcome is a compromise, irrigators have already given up 278GL in the northern basin and we urged no further water recovery. Existing water recovery in the Northern Basin has cost hundreds of jobs in local communities and we felt the focus should be on more than flow

However, the review has recommended 320GL and it is important now to ensure that this critical part of the basin plan implementation is agreed by all sides of politics.

“The future of the basin plan and Northern Basin communities should not become a political football.

“It needs to be made absolutely clear that when the basin plan, with this amendment, is implemented there will be significantly more water guaranteed to arrive at Mendingee lakes, and then down the lower darling to South Australia, than there was on the pre basin plan baseline.

“Irrigators believe that long-term environmental improvements can only be achieved with complementary measures. Addressing issues like cold water pollution, enabling native fish movement and managing pest species both in the river and on land in the riparian corridors is essential for triple bottom line outcomes.

“The MDBA’s independent socio-economic analysis confirms that implementing the basin plan has had a major negative impact on communities and jobs in the Northern Basin.

“The impact has been many times bigger than the impact on Adelaide of the closure of motor vehicle manufacturing, and yet those communities saw nothing like the structural adjustment focus.

“The final outcome, though, is sound. There have been modifications to the targets that should limit further loss of jobs in Northern Basin communities but still deliver the environmental improvements we all want to see – and there is a commitment to complementary measures which will make a real difference to the health of the river system.”

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