



NSWIC
NEW SOUTH WALES
IRRIGATORS'
COUNCIL



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

19/6/17

Irrigators urge Government to commit to Finkel Review

NSW irrigators and cotton growers have called on the Australian Government to take action on electricity pricing crippling farmers, after more than a week of radio silence following the release of the Finkel Review.

On June 9, 2017, Chief Scientist Dr Alan Finkel presented his review on the future of the National Electricity Market to COAG. The Finkel Report highlighted the 'energy trilemma' of energy security, universal access to affordable energy and reduced emissions, a problem that must be solved in order to provide consumers with affordable electricity now and into the future.

"The NSW Irrigators' Council and Cotton Australia welcomed the Finkel Report's three pillars of strong governance, system planning and orderly transition, which are the first steps towards addressing the complexity, duplication in responsibilities, inefficiencies and conflict of interests plaguing our electricity system," says NSW Irrigators' Council Policy Manager, Stefanie Schulte.

"We were also pleased to see that Dr Finkel called for a stronger demand management approach to mitigate future new network costs – a key driver of irrigators' and growers' electricity costs. However, we must ensure that the networks are held to account to implement these changes so that all consumers are able to see price relief."

"It has been more than a week since Dr Finkel released his report, and still we have heard nothing from the Australian Government about its plans to adopt the recommendations - all we see is political handballing of the issue."

"This issue requires leadership at all levels, and so we call on the state governments which control energy networks to indicate their willingness to work with their federal counterparts to reduce the burden of unfair electricity pricing on our primary producers."

Cotton Australia Policy Officer, Felicity Muller, says strong political leadership is required.

"We recognise the complexity of energy policy, so we think the best path forward is to put all options on the table, have an evidence-based conversation and develop a strategy that generates investor certainty and avoids a do nothing approach which undoubtedly be more costly," Ms Muller says.

"Federal Parliament has but one week left to sit before it breaks for six more - frankly, farmers deserve to know what direction the Government intends to take on this very important issue."

"Worryingly, major energy retailers late last week announced their intention to hike prices by 20%, and we are anticipating further price increases by the networks following their successful Federal Court challenge."

"Our growers cannot sustain this pricing pressure without risk to future productivity, financial viability and a loss of international competitiveness. We need government leadership to solve the energy trilemma."

Approved: RS / CM

Media contacts:

Stefanie Schulte
Policy Manager, NSW Irrigators' Council
02 9251 8466

Felicity Muller
Policy Officer, Cotton Australia
02 9669 5222