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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Royal Commission**

**31/01/2019**

The NSW Irrigators' Council says the South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Royal Commission report needs to be carefully considered in the context of the history of the policy development and the stage of Basin Plan implementation.

"We need time to consider the report in its entirety," NSWIC Chief Executive Officer Luke Simpkins said.

"It must be remembered that the Basin Plan we have today has been scrutinised and reviewed multiple times by various parliamentary committees, the Productivity Commission and others over time. We have accepted the Basin Plan in good faith that the instrument passed by Parliament is a legitimate Plan.

"We have a Basin Plan that was developed by a Labor Government to meet the objectives of the Water Act that was drafted by a Liberal Government and implementation has been ongoing under governments of all flavours. It is one of the few policies that has had unequivocal bi-partisan support.

"Irrigation farmers have accepted the Basin Plan as a fact of life, despite the impacts on their businesses and their communities.

"Our farmers and communities need policy certainty so they can plan for their business future. The ongoing questioning of water policy undermines regional confidence and the capacity to maintain our successful irrigation farming industries and the value they contribute to the Australian economy.

Mr Simpkins said the history of water reforms had already limited the capacity of regional communities and that is being compounded by the current drought which has seen shops close, businesses suffer and populations decline.

Nothing can prevent a drought – the Basin Plan cannot prevent a drought. According to WaterNSW, in the first six months of 2018-19 the Northern NSW river systems which supply vital water to the Basin received only 30GL of inflows. That is less than 1% of average inflows supplying water to the system.

“Any attempt to further reduce Australian food and fibre production by withdrawing even more water will result in further social and economic damage to rural communities in NSW and across the Basin,” he said.

“As we read through this report, we hope that rural families and the businesses they support will be respected because the Basin is a working basin that supports a vibrant economy as well as the environment.” ENDS

For further information:

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Approved JC/TN