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## MEDIA RELEASE

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# **Response to Labor: We need more smart water policy for our farmers, communities and the environment, and less politics.**

**07/05/2019**

Following the announcement of Labor's Basin Plan policy today, the NSW Irrigators' Council (NSWIC) responded saying "We need more smart water policy for our farmers, communities, and the environment, and less political games".

CEO of the NSWIC, Luke Simpkins, said "Our message to all parties is to work with our farmers and communities, not against them, to restore the ecology of our river systems".

"The Basin Plan was intended to promote the health of our river systems without destroying communities but increasing the risk of water insecurity for our farmers with poor policy is no lasting solution. While it may grab some attention in an election campaign, to risk the bipartisan support and cooperation of the states will only put the \$13 billion Basin Plan at greater risk of failure. "

"The announcement of further buybacks of water from our farmers - with the removal of the socio-economic criteria agreed by all state governments - is dangerous territory for our farming communities."

"Under the Basin Plan, our farmers have been doing the heavy lifting of water reform to deliver water to the environment, at an enormous cost to the health of their small regional communities."

"By continuing to use farmers as political cannon-fodder, rather than exploring other options on the table (as recommended by the Productivity Commission's latest review) is disappointing."

"The announcement to remove the 1500GL cap and the promise to buyback additional water, is a disappointing, failure to protect our regions."

“There is 5 years remaining to meet these targets, and [for State governments] to work on meeting the environmental objectives. This announcement suggests they are renegeing on their commitment to finding solutions to maintain our farmers, their communities and the environment.”

“The projects to meet the 605GL are crucial to meeting environmental objectives by improving efficiency, rather than undermining rural communities already impacted by the ongoing, severe drought.

“Triple-bottom-line outcomes that all sides want will only be achieved with bipartisan agreement and cooperative action by all concerned. The impacts of poor policy are evident this last summer with many NSW farmers having no water at all.”

“NSWIC does welcome some measures announced under this policy, including helping native fish recovery, partly funding ‘toolkit’ measures, increasing penalties, improving compliance and transparency, and First Nations leadership in the Basin.”

“To get the Basin back on track, we need smart water and environment policy which works with, not against, our farmers in restoring the health of the Basin.”

*Point of clarification: NSWIC would also like to highlight a correction required in the Labor Media announcement – securing A class licences to protect low flows in the Barwon Darling was not a recommendation of the Vertessy Report.*

For further information:

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Approved JC/TN