

## **LABOR 'SHAMEFUL POLITICS' ON BASIN PLAN SLAMMED (06/02/2018)**

NSW Irrigators Council (NSWIC) has slammed as 'shameful politics' the Federal Opposition's decision today to side with the Greens to vote down the Murray Darling Basin Authority's recommendations to the Government on a revised water recovery target and the introduction of a range of environmental 'toolkit measures' for the Northern Basin. The Council said this decision will deepen the economic damage and job losses in Northern Basin communities identified through an extensive review and detailed research on community impacts and environmental outcomes conducted by the Authority over almost 3 years, and set back the achievement of better environmental outcomes from the water already recovered.

NSWIC CEO Mark McKenzie said that Northern Basin communities will feel betrayed by the Federal Labor decision to scrap the previous bi-partisan approach to the Basin Plan between the Opposition and Coalition parties.

"We are dumbfounded that the Opposition would side with the Greens to support a Disallowance Motion in Parliament that is based on complete ignorance. The Authority's recommendation to reduce the Northern Basin water recovery target by 70 Gegalitres will not mean any reduction in water flowing to South Australia, but would prevent further job losses across many northern valleys as more water is taken out of agriculture. The associated 'toolkit measures' would allow more targeted and effective use of the environmental water recovered in the north, but now we will see more water purchased but less effective use of it for the environment. Labor has just kicked a massive own-goal by opposing measures that would make the Basin Plan more effective, and prevent deeper economic damage."

"The Labor decision is also a slap in the face to the Basin Authority which conducted a long and thorough scientific and economic review of the Northern Basin including the recovery volume, and the social and economic impacts on communities – before recommending the amendments to the Plan. The MDBA is the independent authority formed to implement the Basin Plan, but the Federal Opposition has just landed a huge vote of no confidence in the Authority's Northern Basin Review."

Mr McKenzie said it appears that lending a hand to its State colleagues in next month's South Australian Election is more important than protecting the integrity of the Basin Plan and supporting the work of the Murray Darling Basin Authority. He said that pandering to environmental groups, the Greens and the South Australian Government was more important than the loss of hundreds more jobs in the northern Basin that would irrevocably damage the social fabric of scores of rural communities but do nothing more to improve the environment.

**ENDS.**

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Approved RS / TN