

IRRIGATORS SLAM CONTINUING ABC ANTI IRRIGATOR BIAS

(28/05/2018)

NSW Irrigators Council (NSWIC) has angrily responded to yesterday's online news report and last night's Special Report on ABC TV News on Flood Plain Harvesting in Northern NSW – criticising the continuing campaign of anti-irrigator bias in ABC reporting of the Murray Darling Basin Plan implementation in the Northern Basin. NSWIC has slammed the report's use of unsubstantiated opinion as fact.

Mr McKenzie said NSWIC had recently written to the ABC News Management as a co-signatory with other irrigation industry organisations to highlight how the ABC was repeatedly breaching its own editorial policies that call for balance in reporting.

"Once again, we have seen a complete misrepresentation of the facts. This is not new water. The facts are that flood plain harvesting has been part of the irrigation sector extraction of water for cropping in the north since before the 1980s. Harvest volumes will be capped at historical levels as at 2000 and harvested volumes were included in the baseline extraction levels in the Basin Plan. The NSW Government has been working to formalise flood plain harvesting in the north since 2004 and finalised the framework in 2012. It is now introducing a 3-tier compliance package that requires individual irrigators to report on their level of take against historic extractions, as well as valley-wide assessments against capped levels, and compliance audits of on-farm storages - under the NSW Government's Water Reform Action Plan. To suggest that flood plain harvesting is illegal; a free-for-all for irrigators; that massive amounts of water were being taken under a loop-hole; and that flood plain harvesting will impact on the downstream States, is mischievous and blatantly incorrect."

"This is the seventh time in less than 12 months that the ABC has taken a one-sided pro-environmental lobby position on reporting Basin Plan matters – once again claiming that irrigators are threatening the Murray Darling Basin Plan by over-extraction. It is very telling that despite having a contingent of experienced rural reporters at their disposal ABC News continues to send its environmental reporters to tell only one side of the story. It is a bit rich to feature flood plain graziers on the Macquarie Marshes claiming irrigators are 'sucking the river dry', when the whole of Northern NSW is into its second drought year. But once again we have seen a very flawed and factually incorrect story being aired by the ABC," Mr McKenzie said. ENDS.

For further information:

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Approved RS / TN