

Irrigator Access to Environmental Water (19/09/2018)

The New South Wales Irrigators' Council remains concerned that the outlook for rain is not good and the impact on irrigators and the entire agricultural sector is likely to be dire as a result of ongoing drought conditions. The impact of the drought is affecting the economy, our members and ultimately the Australian people who consume the food and use the fibre irrigators produce.

It is not surprising that the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Michael McCormack MP, the Hon Barnaby Joyce MP and others have raised the possibility of using allocated environmental water for productive use. Their strong support of the agricultural sector is appreciated.

CEO of the NSW Irrigators' Council Luke Simpkins said, "New South Wales irrigators need every drop of water that we are legally allowed to produce the food Australians eat and fibre that is so important for this state's, and the nation's economy. We expect that the responsible state agencies will continually assess their holdings to ensure that all water that is legally available, under relevant water plans, for productive use IS allocated for productive use. If any owner of water entitlements, including the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder and state agencies, choose to make water available to the open market we would strongly welcome that and encourage them to do so.

As a legal principle, water entitlements all have the same property rights, regardless of their ownership and end use, and these rights must be respected. Water licenses have been traded and are a legal title under these rules and plans and this must be maintained.

The Council calls on Dept of Industry – Water, MDBA and Water NSW to provide a clear picture of the ownership of water resources that are in storage. It is in everyone's best interests that there is greater transparency of who owns what water resources. It is not easy to get a transparent picture of what water is owned by Commonwealth Environmental Water, how much is carryover, and how much is owned by other states. People see that there are large amounts of water in storage and can't find out who it belongs to. This will only become more important if the drought worsens.

For further information:

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Approved RS / TN