

**NSW IRRIGATORS' COUNCIL PUTS
THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE AND THE REGIONS FIRST
(15/10/2018)**

The New South Wales Irrigators' Council welcomes today's statement by Minister for Regional Water Niall Blair regarding the need for the Commonwealth to consider key criteria when developing socio-economic measures to protect regional communities in any further water recovery under the Basin Plan, post 2019. The NSWIC agrees that the majority of the contribution and the costs of recovering almost 1031 GL has been borne by NSW communities, principally at the cost of the irrigation sector.

CEO of the NSWIC Luke Simpkins said, "Irrigators appreciate this statement by the Minister on behalf of the producers of NSW food and fibre. The Council's position is that additional measures should be considered beyond what the Minister has proposed."

The New South Wales Irrigators' Council has advanced specific measures that will protect not just the irrigation sector in NSW, but also, if enacted, will protect the futures of regional towns/centres and the businesses and families that rely so heavily on the income generated by an effective irrigation sector. In addition, the NSWIC believes that any further attempts to drive irrigators out of food and cotton production should also be considered in terms of the cost to consumers.

"It may be the preference of some people to import all Australian fruit and vegetables from overseas, by undermining the irrigation sector, or perhaps it is their preference that our clothes be made from cotton produced in the third world under third world conditions and wages, however if food and cotton is grown here, we are certain of the quality and health standards. If Australians care about Australian jobs, and want quality food and fibre grown safely, they will support these proposals." Luke Simpkins said.

Australians shouldn't have to pay more for imported produce, grown under lower standards, because of reckless public policy that has no regard for the impact on Regional Australia or the outcomes on public safety.

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Approved RS / TN

CONDITIONS TO BE MET BEFORE FURTHER EFFICIENCY MEASURES

It has long been the position of the NSWIC to oppose any further withdrawal of productive water. Irrigation is critical to the Nation. It is through irrigation that the people of Australia are provided with the highest quality food and world leading cotton. It is as a result of the Irrigation Sector that many towns and regional centres have viable businesses and that thousands of people are employed. Further degrading of the Irrigation Sector could have massive negative effects on the Australian economy, the livelihood of Australian families and the health of the Australian people.

In defence of the Sector, the NSWIC's position is that there must be a strong test applied to any further acquisition of water or 'efficiencies', and that this test must be applied retrospectively to previous acquisitions to learn from the past and inform the future.

To this end, the NSWIC proposes the following measures, as necessary for any form of assessment of further water reforms or efficiencies:

1. That any water 'reform' proposal must positively advance the viability of irrigation regions, and that should be judged in terms of maintenance of crop production levels, on farm and town/centre employment levels, and related spending across the value chain. The result of any proposal must be including defined and measurable positive benefits regarding third party outcomes.
2. That any water 'reform' proposal, be accompanied by an economic impact statement that specifically addresses the outcomes on irrigation businesses in that region, the transport and supporting industries/businesses in the region and the social outcomes that will result, and that those outcomes are to be positive.
3. That any water 'reform' proposal does not result in an increase of the cost of water.
4. That any water 'reform' proposal includes an assessment regarding the impacts on consumers as a result of the proposal being enacted. That assessment should include a cost impact to families of reduced Australian production of food and fibre, and the increased level of importation that will result.
5. That this test be applied to previously enacted water 'reform' proposals that have been initiated since the Water Act 2007, and that where said reforms have failed to meet the test, that an economic assistance plan be enacted to redress the negative outcomes.
6. That any water 'reform' proposal that meets the above-mentioned criteria, have the written agreement of local governments and irrigation organisations within the area directly or indirectly effected by the proposal.