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MEDIA RELEASE

NSW Irrigators' Council Calls Upon MDBA to Rule Out Extra 2,000 Billion Litre Water Grab

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The NSW Irrigators' Council (NSWIC) are seeking a commitment from the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) that the impact of the Basin Plan will not be almost doubled, as a result of legislative interpretation.

NSWIC wrote to NSW Minister Pavey and Federal Minister Littleproud last week, and the MDBA this week to raise the concerns based on legal advice regarding the potential for serious impact to NSW's capacity to manage its water future.

The MDBA's interpretation may lead to an additional 2000GL of water being taken from regional NSW communities and under Commonwealth control – nearly double what was committed under the whole of the Basin Plan (2750GL). That water is not just for food and crop production, but potentially for critical town water supplies and other drought management considerations.

The new interpretation also potentially takes significant power away from the State Minister to manage NSW water resources – significantly hampering the ability of NSW to manage our water security, key ecological assets, as well as to operate the river system efficiently.

It's a complex legal issue, the details of which we are currently working through with relevant experts to ensure the impacts of the Basin Plan are only those committed to, intended and agreed upon.

We are seeking a commitment that the NSW Government continues to operate under its legal Plan Limits and the Commonwealth acknowledge that Plan Limit is the baseline for the Basin Plan reform.

NSWIC is concerned that through this interpretation by the MDBA, NSW may lose control of 2,000 billion litres of water that then won't be available for NSW to decide to use for outcomes for NSW, whether it is critical human need, food and crop production, industry or even State environmental priorities. NSWIC simply asks for NSW to retain control of this 2,000 gigitalitres.

For further information:

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Approved JC/TN