

## MEDIA RELEASE

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# Social & Economic Assessment - an opportunity to improve water policy outcomes for rural people

07/04/2020

NSWIC strongly welcomed the the *Independent Assessment of Social and Economic Conditions in the Basin*, after calling on Government in late 2018 to undertake an assessment to understand the conditions of communities impacted by water reforms.

CEO of the NSWIC, Luke Simpkins, said, “This Assessment is very important, given the devastating impacts water reforms have had, and the need to steer the ship back towards supporting our communities who feed and clothe Australia.”

NSWIC made a number of comments and recommendations to the Panel in our submission.

*“There should be no additional water recovery from the consumptive pool, as communities and the agricultural sector cannot sustain further reductions to water access”, one recommendation read.*

*“Now that the Sustainable Diversion Limits (SDLs) are in place, further environmental progress should be sought by working with the available environmental water to achieve the best possible outcomes”.*

*“Shifting water out of production will have severe social and economic impacts. Whilst efforts to mitigate some of these impacts are possible, there is an underlying ultimate cost to communities of removing (20% of) water from production which is not fully compensable or replaceable.”*

NSWIC is concerned about Basin Plan timeframes, and urge bi-partisan support from Government to extend timeframes for certain elements. This is particularly relevant given the current/recent circumstances which were unforeseeable in 2012 - the worst drought on record, devastating bushfires, and now a global pandemic.

*“The focus must be on having the least possible impact on communities, whilst getting the best possible environmental outcomes as required under the Plan. This cannot be achieved if we don’t assess where we are at, and what changes are needed to improve further implementation of the Plan.”*

*“This is about getting it done right, not just quickly. We don’t want to take our foot off the accelerator, but we’ve got to refuel the tank so we can actually make it to finish line.”*

*“To start with, we need bi-partisan commitments from Government for flexibility in timeframes, opportunity for new and improved SDLAM projects that are supported by communities, action on official government inquiry recommendations to improve implementation and a commitment for no additional water recovery.*

At the same time we need to seriously look at a strategy to get our farms and communities back on their feet and flourishing. The Panel has shed light onto the devastating consequences that water policy has had on our communities.

“The Panel has listened to us, and now we ask both sides of Government to listen to them. We ask Government to consider the findings seriously.”

“This report should be a reminder to both Government and the Australian public that **we can’t feed a nation without water.**”

NSWIC policy on the Basin Plan is available [[HERE](#)].

NSWIC submission on the Social and Economic Assessment is available [[HERE](#)].

For further information:

Luke Simpkins – CEO NSW Irrigators’ Council