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## MEDIA RELEASE

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# NSW Irrigators turn attention to climate change

**10/11/2020**

NSW Irrigators' Council has elevated climate change with a new policy portfolio focused on water security impacts and appropriate policy responses. NSWIC members voted for the new portfolio at the Council AGM last week.

“Climate change is one of the greatest risks to water security, and thus the farming sector in NSW. Irrigators are on the frontline of the impacts, and they need to be at the frontline when it comes to the national climate change conversation,” said CEO Claire Miller.

“Climate change is already apparent with longer, more frequent and severe droughts, and fewer wet years. The climate change conversation is typically focused on energy, but water security must be part of the conversation, too.”

The NSW water management framework already adjusts water shares annually to reflect climate conditions. Under the Water Management Act 2000, towns are allocated water first, then the environment, then stock and domestic water, and then industry.

Being the last to be allocated water, and the first to have the tap switched off when dry, irrigators have much at stake. Addressing climate change requires an economy- and community-wide response to reduce emissions and make efficiencies in sectors where it is most cost-effective.

“The climate change scenarios are confronting. Australia needs to consider how best to support farmers to continue producing food and fibre under more extreme conditions,” Ms Miller said. “And the reality remains that food and fibre require water to grow.”

“Sustaining healthy rivers and ensuring productive resilience in changing climate needs a collaborative approach and practical solutions driven from local communities.”

Earlier this year, a study showed irrigation plays a significant role in reducing heat effects. Dr Annette Hirsch, ANU Research School of Earth Sciences, said “Clearly, irrigation has substantially reduced human exposure to the dangerous effects of warming and heat extremes.”<sup>1</sup>

NSWIC is now developing a detailed Climate Change policy and strategy, and welcomes contributions.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.anu.edu.au/news/all-news/irrigation-helps-beat-the-heat-of-global-warming#:~:text=Large%2Dscale%20irrigation%20can%20help,new%20international%20study%20has%20found.>