

MEDIA RELEASE

Metering hurdles must be resolved before deadlines

22/04/2021

NSW Irrigators' Council (NSWIC) is frustrated that issues beyond the control of irrigators are slowing the roll-out of new world-leading meters.

Policy Manager of NSWIC, Christine Freak, said "While it is disappointing more new high-standard meters are not already in place, this is an ambitious world-leading metering reform and inevitably that means some teething issues will be encountered."

The new metering reform is being phased in, with most irrigators still having until the end of this year (northern Basin), the end of next year (southern Basin), or the end of 2023 (coastal valleys) to become compliant.

"It is a positive these teething issues can be identified and resolved now, before most of the State's irrigators are required to become compliant over the next few years.

"We have come a long way already – the first rollout issue was that there was no manufacturer globally who could produce a meter with such high specifications, because this is a global first. Now we do have manufacturers, but all but one are overseas creating supply and services issues due to pandemic-disrupted transport and travel.

"Nonetheless, by the end of 2023 when this rollout is complete, NSW will not only have the highest metering requirements in Australia, but the highest requirements for irrigators anywhere in the world.

"This also serves as a reminder that we have a tough new water cop in NSW with boots on the ground and satellites in the skies, and they are keeping a close eye on water compliance."

NSWIC does wish to clarify that meters are already in place to measure water take – this is about transitioning those meters to a new world-leading high standard.

The pandemic has led to significant supply issues from the global manufacturers, whilst flooding has made some sites inaccessible for meter installation.

The irrigation industry is working with NRAR and Government agencies to ensure a timely and efficient roll-out of the remainder of the metering transition, but calls on Government to resolve some procedural and technical barriers frustrating irrigators' efforts to comply.

"This is a very expensive process for irrigators to install new, highly-advanced meters, so we need everyone working together to get it done right. Water compliance is a matter we take very seriously. As an industry, we want this reform rolled out ASAP."