

## MEDIA RELEASE

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# Basin Plan needs amending: NSWIC to Senate Committee

**19/11/2021**

The Australian Parliament needs to act on recommendations to amend the Murray-Darling Basin Plan made in more than 45 reviews since the Plan's inception.

The NSW Irrigators' Council told a Senate Committee inquiry this week that amending the Plan is not about walking away from it but acting on expert advice to improve its implementation.

“This is about doing better,” said CEO Claire Miller. “And it’s overwhelmingly clear we can and must do better, or otherwise fail Basin communities, farmers and the environment.”

“More than 45 reviews into the Basin Plan have consistently recommended changes – this should signal that amendment is overdue with a clear pathway to resolving the issues.”

NSWIC said multiple reviews recommended legislative changes to, for example, allow for new projects to make environmental water go further with community support; flexible timeframes; and, redirecting funds to complementary measures such as fish ladders and controlling feral pests such as carp, goats and pigs degrading rivers, wetlands and floodplains.

“The challenge is obvious, widely recognised and accepted,” Ms Miller said. “It is clear the remaining elements of the Basin Plan will not be completed on time. Everyone loses if we don’t fix things now and get the Plan back on track.”

NSWIC told the Senate committee the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, alone, has transferred one in every five litres of agricultural water back to the environment. For perspective, that’s four Sydney Harbors of water transferred from irrigators to the environment within a decade.

“This has come at a significant cost to Basin communities, as highlighted by the recent Sefton Inquiry. The irrigation industry now has the lowest ever levels of water since its development.”

NSWIC called for bipartisan, constructive and informed discussion to drive change. “The worst-case scenario is yet another polarising political debate. We need solutions that show respect for our Basin communities and a focus on environmental outcomes over rigid water targets.

“Most environmental challenges such as carp, erosion, water pollution and reconnecting rivers and wetlands across private property cannot be fixed by just adding more water.

“We are now approaching one decade since the Basin Plan commenced, and we know a lot more about managing water now than we did in 2012. It’s time we acted on the lessons learnt so far.”

The NSWIC submission is available on our [website](#).