

Murray-Darling Basin Plan

The New South Wales Irrigators Council say that the release of the final Murray-Darling Basin Plan today marks the end of a long road - but also a point in the history of this country that will be viewed with astonishment in future.

The Council's Chief Executive Officer, Andrew Gregson, says that the Plan has been considerably improved through consistent industry and community effort over the past four years.

"It pays to remember that the Basin Plan was originally going to be implemented by reducing the reliability of every entitlement with a bizarre compensation scheme that returned a fraction of the value of the entitlement. It was virtually compulsory acquisition.

"The Plan that we now have at very least recognises that water rights are property rights. All sides of politics have recognised that any Plan must be implemented via the market, where 100% of the value of an entitlement must be paid and only to willing sellers.

"Further, there's now a recognition that infrastructure investment is the best way to acquire water entitlements. We fought hard to have that implemented via a stated cap on purchase, but the Government has unfortunately not backed its rhetoric in this area. We call on the Coalition to take up this sensible policy.

Whilst an improvement, the Council says that Basin Plan is a short-term policy that panders to minority interests.

"The globe needs food and fibre. The Prime Minister is happy to advance the rhetoric of feeding and clothing a growing global population - but this Basin Plan does nothing to recognise Australia's role in supporting global security and stability.

"We are a nation rich in water resources. Let's put this in context - the Basin Plan will see us using well less than one third and will let the remainder run to sea. In a growing world, that sort of resource management cannot and will not last. As a nation, we must come to terms with that. Green idealism will neither feed nor clothe people."

The Council will consider the Basin Plan in detail before advising a position on whether Parliament should accept it.

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