

Media release



Murray Irrigation

Monday 22 December 2014

Water Act Review report welcomed

Murray Irrigation has welcomed the release of the Report by the Expert Panel charged with reviewing the operation of the Water Act 2007.

In his final act as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment before being promoted over the weekend, Senator Simon Birmingham, released the report on Friday 19 December 2014 after receiving the report from the Expert Panel in November.

Murray Irrigation Chairman, Bruce Simpson, said after a quick read of the report and recommendations there were no real concerns or surprises.

"In fact, we are pleased to see that a number of issues raised by Murray Irrigation in the review process have been addressed by the Expert Panel," Mr Simpson said.

"A key issue for irrigators has been the fact that if the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder conducted a trade, he is obliged by the Act to use the proceeds from the trade to purchase more water,"

"It was always our view that this obligation was an unnecessary restriction that gave no consideration to how funds could be used to improve environmental outcomes over and above the 'just add water' mentality.

"We are very pleased to see the Expert Panel have recommended that the Water Holder can use proceeds from trade for environmental activities other than (water) acquisitions.

"Unfortunately they did not go so far as to recommend that the Water Holder become self-funding and use proceeds to pay for operational costs, but the Panel did conclude that the Water Holder should continue to be funded by the Commonwealth from consolidated revenue ensuring that all tax-payers contribute," he said.

The Government is expected to respond to all 23 recommendations early in the New Year; however, Senator Birmingham said work would start immediately on two of the recommendations which call for a review of the Water Charge Rules and information collection.

"Murray Irrigation fully supports these reviews and hope that they will lead to more streamlined regulation and reporting requirements for Infrastructure Operators," Mr Simpson said.

"We look forward to seeing the full Government response in the New Year and participating in any further reviews that are undertaken."

Ends.

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