

Media release



Murray Irrigation

Thursday 16 September 2015

Turning Water into Agriculture

Murray Irrigation has welcomed the news that the new Coalition agreement will see water moved into the agriculture portfolio.

While the detail of the arrangements are yet to be known, Murray Irrigation Chairman, Bruce Simpson, said it was sensible to manage water policy with end users in mind, which includes farmers and the environment.

“Water and agriculture go hand in hand as does agriculture and environmental health,” Mr Simpson said.

“We have both agricultural and environmental customers, we currently deliver water for both, and will continue to do so.

“For too long people have played it as one or the other when it is not necessarily the case.

“We work closely and constructively with all of our stakeholders including producers, environmental managers, our community and the Government.”

Mr Simpson said it was a shame that water policy had come to be seen through the singular prism of the Basin Plan when it is far more diverse and has broader implications.

“It is simplistic and naïve to only look at water through the prism of one policy area such as the Basin Plan and with one outcome, environmental, in mind.”

“Agriculture makes a significant contribution to the national economy and changes to water policy have a substantial impact on agricultural production.

“When we have a Government that has long been talking about increasing agricultural productivity it is sensible that water forms part of that strategy.

“We don’t see that as excluding or working against the environment. We see it as looking at the whole – the triple bottom line; social, economic and environmental.

“The important thing is stakeholders and industry need to be engaged with policy development regardless of which portfolio it is administered under.

“I think we all recognise that water is vital for the environment, but it is also vital for agriculture and the two should be symbiotic.”

Mr Simpson said Murray Irrigation would wait and see exactly how the portfolio responsibilities are distributed and would like to see social and economic factors elevated to equal status with the environment.

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For more information contact Perin Davey on T. 1300 138 265.