

Special Talking Water

Friday 26 October 2012



Murray Irrigation

Prime Minister's Basin Plan announcement

The Prime Minister and the Water Minister today announced new funding to recover a further 450GL of environmental water from efficiency works and to address system constraints.

Murray Irrigation does not support further water recovery. As a result we have today held a meeting with Shadow Water Minister Senator Barnaby Joyce via teleconference and local member, Sussan Ley to highlight our concerns.

The announcement which was delivered jointly with the South Australian Government clearly shows that despite the rhetoric, the Basin Plan is not about achieving a balance between environment, society and production it is about political appeasement.

It is another turn in the failed process implemented by the Commonwealth Government since 2007 that has run rough shod over the people who live, work and farm in regional basin communities, who it seems are politically irrelevant and unimportant to this government.

The Prime Minister's press release says \$200 million will be used to remove constraints such as low lying bridges and undersized dam outlets. She has made this announcement before any work has been done to investigate constraints and assess the costs associated with addressing them, such as easement purchase or infrastructure costs. There has been no consultation with stakeholders, to develop a constraints management strategy.

Water Minister, Tony Burke, described today's announcement as a win-win; however it is not. The proposal fails to acknowledge the fact that there are increasing impacts on communities through greater water recovery and it increases uncertainty for communities with no information about how much water will be targeted for recovery in their region.

Murray Irrigation believes the acquisition of water via on-farm investment allows irrigators to maintain productivity while providing water for the environment but we have consistently told the Minister that even water recovery through on-farm projects has an impact on the region.

The Prime Minister today announced:

- \$1.77 billion over ten years from 2014.
- \$200 million of which will be used to remove constraints such as low lying bridges and undersized dam outlets;
- Allow an additional 450GL of water above the 2,750GL described in the plan to be recovered;
- Introducing legislation to establish a special account to advance budget appropriation before the end of the year;
- Finalise the Basin Plan before the end of the year.

For the latest news on the issue go to the newsfeed section on the Murray Irrigation website.

Noel Graham

Chairman