

10 August 2010

ALP Policy Welcomed – Basin Plan Still No Good

The NSW Irrigators Council has welcomed the policy of the Labor Party, announced this morning by Prime Minister Gillard, to meet the difference between current agricultural water use caps and the as-yet unannounced Sustainable Diversion Limits through the market.

Chief Executive Officer Andrew Gregson says the decision reflects a long-held position of the Council that the property right in water must be respected, as it underpins hundreds of businesses and communities.

“We have advocated for some time that any acquisition of water must occur in the market place between willing buyers and willing sellers. We believe that this announcement from the Labor Party underpins that, which we greatly welcome.

The Council remains deeply sceptical of the Basin Plan process that this announcement appears designed to address.

“When Australia set out on the path of water reform in the Basin, it was on the basis of maximising the environmental, social and economic returns from our available water resources. That was a sensible policy approach.

“The Basin Plan doesn’t follow that path. We’ve ended up with a Plan that is based solely on environmental water, which clearly isn’t sensible. It will cost thousands of jobs, close hundreds of family farms and directly affect each and every Australian.

“Whilst supporting a policy to recognise the market as the place to obtain water, we can’t support the decimation of regional Australia on a poor policy basis. That remains our key concern – and reversing it is the policy that we advance to all political parties.

The Council is concerned about the MoU between NSW and the Commonwealth surrounding the Menindee Lakes and Broken Hill.

“We would like to see an efficient Menindee system, but are always concerned when a proposal sees the issue of new entitlements. That *always* has an effect on others. We’ll wait to see the detail of that effect before we comment on this part of the policy.

ENDS

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For further information:

Andrew Gregson, Chief Executive

Office: 02 9251 8466 Mobile: 0416 88 44 68