



MEDIA RELEASE

Irrigators united on Snowy sale

Irrigator and commodity groups in the NSW Murray and Murrumbidgee valleys today re-confirmed their support for the sale of Snowy Hydro Limited, subject to guarantees regarding ongoing flows for irrigation.

Murray Irrigation Limited, Murrumbidgee Irrigation Limited, Coleambally Irrigation Cooperative Limited, SunRice and the Ricegrowers' Association of Australia Inc (RGA) stated that their support is and has always been on the basis that a number of guarantees are made as part of the privatisation process.

“There have been suggestions of a push for unlimited individual shareholdings in a privatised Snowy Hydro”, said RGA President Laurie Arthur.

“Our organisations clearly prefer that individual Australians own a privatised Snowy Hydro and as such, we continue to insist on a permanent cap for individual shareholdings”.

Murrumbidgee Irrigation Chairman Dick Thompson went further in his support for a cap on individual shareholdings.

“Snowy Hydro owns and manages substantial strategic and long-life assets and so it is vital that a maximum cap of 10% on individual shareholdings is applied and this cap can only be changed by a 75% shareholder vote.”

He also added that shares should be set aside for irrigators as part of the share issue.

Coleambally Irrigation Chairman Robert Black responded to speculation that a privatised Snowy could ‘hold water up’ preventing release to downstream irrigators to maximise its profits.

“We have asked the NSW and Federal governments to provide us with guarantees that all existing legislative and annual water release arrangements as well as MDBC agreements will remain in place post-privatisation. Provided these arrangements remain in place then it will be business as usual”.

Murray Irrigation Chairman Stewart Ellis added that annual distributions to both the Murray and Murrumbidgee valleys must remain in place after privatisation.

“The 1062GL and 1026GL released to the Murray and Murrumbidgee valleys respectively underpin our annual allocations. We have been assured that the license underwriting the guaranteed releases is not under threat.”

SunRice Chairman Gerry Lawson said, “Provided guarantees on the issues we have raised can be given then the privatisation of Snowy Hydro need not be seen as a threat but a potential opportunity for the irrigation industry in our area.”

Ends

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