



Australian Dairy Industry Council Inc.

Media Release

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Proposed Basin Plan a blow for dairy farmers and families

For immediate release

The water recovery targets proposed in the draft Basin Plan would mean a permanent drought for dairy farmers and regional towns, the Australian Dairy Industry Council (ADIC) warned today.

ADIC Chair Chris Griffin said dairy farmers had already made great gains in water efficiency, but a permanent reduction in water availability on this scale would inevitably lead to severe and lasting decline in irrigation-dependent regions.

“This is not just about dairy farmers it also about milk company infrastructure - milk tanker drivers, milk factory employees, their families and the towns they live in,” he said.

Mr Griffin said the Commonwealth already owned more than 1000 gigalitres of water previously used for irrigation.

“This is on top of 800 gigalitres of water saved before 2009, and there’s even more to come from water saving infrastructure projects planned and underway,” Mr Griffin said.

The dairy industry across Qld, NSW, Victoria and SA will be impacted by the draft Basin Plan, however, the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) has recognised that the dairy industry in northern Victoria will be among the hardest hit if the Commonwealth keeps buying water to meet the 2750-gigalitre target.

“We urge the Authority and the Commonwealth to use the consultation period to set a sustainable diversion limit that balances the needs of the environment and regional communities,” Mr Griffin said.

ADIC water taskforce chair Daryl Hoey said the water recovery target released today was around 40 per cent of the annual average water used by agriculture across the Basin each year.

“This means permanent drought for farmers and regional towns,” Mr Hoey said.

“The dairy industry wants the Authority to analyse whether the environmental watering objectives can be achieved using the water bought so far and saved in infrastructure works planned and underway. We support strategic water purchases for the environment where they are linked to water-saving infrastructure projects.”

“But there shouldn’t be any more general buyback tenders in the southern connected system before the proposed review in 2015, when it will be clearer whether that water is even needed once environmental works and other measures are taken into account.”

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