

Media Release

26 October 2012

\$1.77 billion doesn't buy a credible Basin Plan

For immediate release

The Federal Government is playing regional communities for fools if it thinks \$1.77 billion over 10 years will buy acceptance of what remains a deeply flawed Basin Plan, the Australian Dairy Industry Council (ADIC) said today.

"Today's announcement is just smoke and mirrors, to distract attention from the fact the Government is yet to deliver an acceptable solution to closing the gap to 2750GL," said ADIC president Chris Griffin.

"The Prime Minister knows 3200GL can't be delivered without flooding farms, towns, roads, caravan parks and tourist attractions like the Tocumwal beaches. Raising a couple of low-lying bridges to let more water flow under safely just makes it easier to run the river at the same level that flooded hundreds of homes in Morgan in February 2011.

"So where's the money to buy the flood easements, build levee banks, and repair roads and eroded river banks after each flood? Without that, today's announcement is just an expensive way of getting one State over the line for no actual environmental gain."

Mr Griffin said the Government had to focus on fixing the real problems with the Basin Plan. ADIC Basin Response Taskforce Chair Daryl Hoey said environmental outcomes similar to or better than 2750GL could be achieved with up to 2100GL in entitlements and at least 650GL in environmental offsets.

"We want a guarantee that the 650GL in environmental offsets will be adequately funded and that the Murray Darling Basin Authority's models will enable the Sustainable Diversion Limit to be adjusted by the full amount," Mr Hoey said.

"So far, all we have seen from the Government is a commitment to an adjustment that only goes in one direction – up.

"The fact is that while recovering water through on-farm works is preferable to outright buybacks, it still means another 450GL of irrigator entitlements transferred to the environment. That means less water in the collective pool for irrigation, and higher water prices. All current and new funding should be directed to first closing the gap to 2750GL, including achieving the 650GL in environmental offsets.

"We urge the Coalition, the Greens and the Independents in Parliament not to be railroaded into a quick vote on amending the Water Act and accepting the Basin Plan by the end of the year. We will all need time to carefully consider the detail in this legislative instrument, to make an informed judgement on whether it really can deliver what the Government claims."

-ends-

For further information contact:

Chris Griffin
ADIC Chairman
Mobile: 0402 846 239

Daryl Hoey
ADIC Basin Response Taskforce Chair
Mobile: 0407 582 982