



Niall Blair

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Minister for Regional Water
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MEDIA RELEASE

Monday, 13 March 2017

REVIEW TO PUT NSW BASIN COMMUNITIES FIRST

NSW Minister for Regional Water, Niall Blair today released a report recommending the need for greater understanding of the 'upwater' program and its potential to cause economic decline in regional NSW.

The Basin Plan provides an additional 450 gigalitres of upwater to be recovered, on top of the 2,750 gigalitres target, through on-farm and other water efficiency projects that are socially and economically neutral or beneficial.

"For some time now NSW business owners and community leaders have expressed concern around the Basin Plan's upwater program, primarily because current agreements do not consider social and economic impacts beyond the farm-gate," Mr Blair said.

"In NSW we are committed to implementing the Basin Plan in a way that puts communities first – and to achieve this all states must be open to having an honest conversation about the upwater program, which is why we have commissioned this independent report.

"To be confident the Basin Plan's upwater program is not going to set regional NSW further back, we need to consider outcomes of the program not only for the individual participant but the broader community.

"For example, we need a better understanding of what these efficiency measures mean for our irrigation sector, particularly the irrigation corporations, and total employment and economic activity in the local town.

"With the cost of running water delivery networks largely fixed, we have seen how detrimental water recovered through buybacks has been to some of these irrigation corporations."

The report shows the socio-economic 'neutral or beneficial' provisions in existing inter-state agreements are not practical or reasonable when compared with accepted definitions of socio-economic impact.

Mr Blair said the insight provided by this report would inform discussions at Ministerial Council in Mildura later this week.

The report is available at www.water.nsw.gov.au

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