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Coalition water policy recognises community concerns

The NSW Farmers' Association has welcomed today's water policy announcement by the Federal Coalition as a more balanced approach to planning in the Murray Darling Basin.

NSW Farmers' Association President Charles Armstrong said the Coalition has recognised the need to balance environmental, social, and economic outcomes in the Basin.

"The commitment to acknowledge farmers' property right in relation to water is welcomed with the Coalition confirming that it will pay for the gap between the Sustainable Diversion Limit and current water use caps," Mr Armstrong said.

The commitment to invest in improvements in water use efficiency in particular will increase the water available for productive use by farmers, which will help ensure sustainability of rural communities.

The Coalition has announced an additional \$300 million for on farm infrastructure and \$200 million for strengthening Basin Communities.

"These commitments show that the Coalition has been listening to farmers on this issue," Mr Armstrong said.

The NSW Farmers' Association has also welcomed the announcement of a joint Productivity Commission/ ABARE study into the socio-economic impacts of the Basin Plan.

"This study, if implemented, would form a critical piece of the Basin Planning picture and help ensure that the consequences of any decision to remove water from current productive uses is thoroughly understood," Mr Armstrong said.

"However, we are concerned about the potential impact on some irrigators of the purchase of 150 gigalitres of water for the Lower Lakes and Coorong. To do this through the temporary market could undermine its use as a key tool for irrigators in managing risk and ensuring production options remain open," Mr Armstrong concluded.

The NSW Farmers' Association is currently conducting an online survey regarding the socio-economic impacts of water cutbacks in the Murray Darling Basin. Farmers have until Sunday 29 August 2010 to complete the survey, which is available at <http://www.nswfarmers.org.au/surveys/mdb>.

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