

Tuesday 17 February 2009

PR/020/09

Farmers concerned over water buyback plan

The NSW Farmers' Association has expressed its concern over the compromise reached by the Federal Government in passing the Economic Stimulus Package, saying that the decision to fast-track spending for the Murray Darling Basin has been made without industry consultation.

NSW Farmers' Association President Jock Laurie says the decision, which will see \$500 million allocated to fast-track water buybacks, will have a major impact on irrigators and surrounding rural communities in NSW and could see the compulsory acquisition argument re-emerge.

"While we are not against water buybacks in theory, we are categorically opposed to compulsory water acquisition and the fast-tracking of the buyback process," Mr Laurie said.

"The decision by the Government to not consult with industry or even make the contents of the proposal publicly available could have devastating impacts on irrigators and rural communities in the Murray Darling Basin.

"Our concern is that this funding will see water taken away from valuable agricultural production, with a devastating impact on irrigation communities," Mr Laurie said.

The announcement is of particular concern to the Association as the majority of water buybacks are expected to occur in NSW, thus artificially increasing the price of water for irrigators. Of additional concern is the announcement that the Productivity Commission will enquire into the most effective way to run buybacks, raising fears of the introduction of compulsory acquisition.

"We have long lobbied the Federal Government to reverse the current trend of accelerating water buybacks, and called on them to get the investment in on-farm water infrastructure underway to ensure more water is available for the entire Murray Darling Basin," Mr Laurie said.

"We are, of course, extremely concerned about the impacts on our rural communities and the lack of consultation with our State and we intend to work closely with the Productivity Commission to ensure the buyback process does not further disadvantage our Members," Mr Laurie concluded.

**Note for Radio: Audio grabs from NSW Farmers' Association Conservation & Resource Management Committee Member Bruce Atkinson are available from the Association's website (www.nswfarmers.org.au/media_centre/audio_grabs). However, if you would prefer to conduct your own interview, please contact Amanda Barwick or Ruth Redfern on the numbers listed below.*

Contact:

Amanda Barwick (Media Manager) 0428 400 736
Ruth Redfern (Media Officer) 0429 990 218

If you no longer wish to be on our mailing list simply [click here](#) to unsubscribe. If you are having difficulty unsubscribing from this page please email us on media@nswfarmers.org.au and we will remove you from our lists.