

Tuesday 5 October 2010

PR/185/10

Basin Plan could force 1 in 3 NSW farmers to quit agriculture

The NSW Farmers' Association has today released survey results into the Murray Darling Basin Plan (MDBP) process highlighting a severe lack of community engagement and a farming landscape that could be changed forever.

NSW Farmers' Association Vice President, Fiona Simson says the survey results confirm that the proposed MDBP could cause permanent damage to Australia's agricultural production capacity – threatening food security.

"More than one in three farmers surveyed believe the Draft Plan could force them to leave agriculture permanently, closing the door on generations of farming history," Mrs Simson said.

"Of those who believe their businesses can remain viable under reduced water allocations, 38 percent expect to reduce the scale of their operations.

"Downsizing would inevitably lead to job losses and 31 percent of respondents say they expect to cut staff due to reduced income," Fiona Simson said.

"While there will be an opportunity to comment on the Draft Plan, it is appalling that the Government has not sought the input of irrigation communities in preparing the Draft.

"For every farmer who leaves the land, someone else loses their job; a local business loses a client; a town loses a resident – some towns won't survive," Mrs Simson said.

While the Association acknowledges the Federal Government's recent commitment to purchase water from "willing sellers", this won't reduce the flow-on impacts in the community.

"More than 70 percent of survey respondents indicated that significant cuts would reduce viability of irrigation infrastructure in the district; this finding suggests that some farmers will be forced to sell water, regardless of their desire to do so," Mrs Simson said

"The prolonged uncertainty is motivating farmers to sell their water entitlements under the environmental water buy-back program, progressively eroding the fabric of irrigation districts," Mrs Simson said.

"To continue down this track to achieve environmental targets would be socially destructive and would make recent commitments given to regional Australia impossible to achieve.

The Association is calling on the Federal Government to ensure the Basin Plan that is due to be released this Friday, provides equal consideration to the needs of farmers, the rural communities they support, as well as the environment," Fiona Simson said.

The survey, complete with regional breakdowns, can be found on the Association website www.nswfarmers.org.au.

Contact: Olivia Suzanski 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.