



The Peak body for five landholder associations and 1600 irrigators in the Murray Valley

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## **Media Release**

# **SRI urges Government policy on water buyback not to leave upstream regional communities behind.**

Southern Riverina Irrigators (SRI) Deputy Chairman, Tim McKindlay, believes that whilst the water initiatives announced last Thursday by the Prime Minister are aimed at Northern NSW and QLD, there are certain principles that must be applied to water recovery throughout the entire basin.

"SRI continues to be concerned that insufficient attention is being given to the effects on communities and regional economies as water is removed from these areas. Irrigation drives the economic activity in these communities and even if farmers sell their water and remain living in the area, the reduced production levels will impact on local businesses that supply inputs, which in turn will have social implications as people have to leave the area to find work." Mr McKindlay said.

Mr McKindlay also expressed concern that pressure from the wider community including conservation groups and some water experts, is forcing the Government to focus solely on water purchases at the expense of other initiatives in the Federal Water Plan.

"Whilst the \$3.1 billion earmarked for direct purchases is a large portion of money, it is less than one third of the total amount of money announced in the plan. Water savings through infrastructure works, transmission losses and management of storages have the potential to yield significant volumes of water without impacting on productivity. These measures would also implement a higher level of reliability than the purchasing of entitlements the government is currently buying from irrigators." he concluded.

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