

SAMI update:

October 12, 2007

Irrigators to brief shadow minister, as proposal reaches PM

The South Australian Murray Irrigators drought task force will take their case to Melbourne tomorrow to meet with the Federal Shadow Agriculture Minister Kerry O'Brien.

SAMI director Tim Whetstone, Almond Board of Australia chief executive officer Julie Haslett and Riverland Winegrape Growers Association executive officer Chris Byrne will brief Mr O'Brien about the proposed finance plan to assist irrigators to obtain/or sell water.

"It is very important that we receive bipartisan support for this project," Mr Whetstone said. "If an election is called, any action taken during the campaign will require the support of both sides of parliament."

Mr Whetstone said the One Basin, One Plan proposal is designed to offer help to all irrigators and provide those committed to keeping trees or stock alive, with low interest, long-term loans.

Mr Whetstone said they had received encouraging support from SA Federal Ministers Alexander Downer and Nick Minchin in the past week.

"We have been told today that our detailed support plan has been presented to the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff and will be the subject of discussions at the highest level in the land.

"We are expecting to meet with the Agriculture Minister Peter McGauran early next week, and know that Nick Minchin wants to support us and attend that meeting.

"We are stressing in all our discussions that this support must be rolled out immediately and not get bogged down in paperwork like the EC packages.

"It is very disappointing when you see how much work is involved in getting EC assistance, and it is a separate issue that SAMI will be pressing home in subsequent talks with these politicians.

"Our One Basin, One Plan package has been purposely designed to minimise bureaucratic involvement to allow immediate relief to be secured by those keen to purchase more water for plantings or feed for their livestock.

"Time is running out, we need action and support now to maximise the chances of survival for our members."

For further comment contact Tim Whetstone 0428 617 800

Tim Jackson on behalf of SAMI



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