



## MEDIA RELEASE

### States urged to say, 'no way' to the NWA

**19 September 2024, Canberra ACT:** National Irrigators are calling on states and territories, the future signatories to an updated National Water Agreement, to say “no way to the draft NWA”. The Federal Government’s rushed NWA is tipped to be our nations next water management blueprint<sup>i</sup> but risks major changes to water management frameworks in its current form.

Zara Lowien, CEO of the National Irrigators' Council said, “States cannot sign the current draft NWA.”

“It’s a risky and untested document that needs a rethink, if it is to be successful. This includes how to gain support from stakeholders and the states to implement it” she said.

Ms Lowien pointing out “the draft NWA includes over 300 principles to be agreed. Many overhaul the current water management systems, creating uncertainty for water users, industries and communities”.

“The Federal Government is downplaying concerns about the prescriptive nature, claiming it is not binding for signatories. This contradicts our experience with previous agreements and raises a crucial question: why rush to sign an agreement with the Prime Minister and Premiers, if there is no intention to enforce it?”

“The Federal Government also seems intent on finalising it before the election which is why they are trying to bulldoze through contested proposals without undertaking the due diligence or proper consultation,” said Ms Lowien.

“We recognise the existing agreement needed modernisation, but we have significant concerns with the new drafting that seeks to overtake constitutional and democratic processes by heavily relying on international agreements and asking states to agree to principles, not consistent with legislation.”

“Some of the principles are that ‘new’ the implications for water management are largely unknown, including requiring First-Nations to consent to decision-making relating to water, which can be viewed as a veto power, as well as recognising waterways as a ‘living entity’ associated with legal personhood status.”

“At its simplest, the agreement will enable the Federal Government to go well beyond their constitutional remit and make water decisions more complex,” said Ms Lowien.

“We are calling on the states to stand up against the Federal Government’s poor processes and urgency, and ensure the new NWA remains a highly regarded and respected roadmap for water management in Australia.”

“Getting it done right, is more important than getting it done before the election and we shouldn’t accept anything less than what we have now,” said Ms Lowien.

#SayNoWayToTheNWA #NoWAY

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Submissions to the public consultation closed 18<sup>th</sup> September 2024.

The NIC submission is available online via the [National Irrigators' Council website](#).

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<sup>i</sup> The original National Water Initiative (NWI) was signed in 2004 as the blueprint to Australia's water management and has been well respected for its best-practice approaches, and development from a ground-up approach.

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