



MEDIA RELEASE

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LESS BLAME AND MORE WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT WORK ON SOLUTIONS

Having seen the effects of the millennium drought on the region's towns, Central NSW Councils have long feared another drought and have been preparing for it. The first step was a national award-winning Water Security Study in 2009 identifying risks and solutions to town water supplies for a 50-year horizon.

"Many local solutions from the Water Security Study including pipelines, bores, recycling and storm water harvesting schemes have been implemented by our Councils, but we still need shovels in the ground for the big-ticket items that will hopefully drought proof the region's towns into the future. These extend well beyond an individual Council's remit," says Cr John Medcalf, Chair of Central NSW Councils Joint Organisation and Mayor of Lachlan Shire.

"The lesson from the past is that as soon as it rains, government funding and the political will to implement the large-scale regional solutions needed dries up," he says.

According to Orange Mayor, Cr Reg Kidd the issue isn't just about infrastructure spend it's also about getting the state government's policy settings right.

"As we've seen with the Water Supply Critical Needs Bill currently before the NSW Parliament, there is a need for changes to policy settings to facilitate the delivery of water supplies including policies around triggers for environmental flows and to enable the operation of critical infrastructure such as the Macquarie Pipeline and Storm Water Harvesting. We need these triggers to be part of the ongoing framework so we can call on them as required and not be needing legislation to turn the taps," says Cr Kidd.

"Advocacy for regional infrastructure and policy solutions has been a long hard road over the past decade punctuated by the political cycle and changes to the machinery of Government where water management, in particular, has been subject to the greatest change if not churn", says Cr Bill West, Mayor of Cowra.

"Where this region has a long-track record of working collaboratively there is a great opportunity for all levels of Government to work collectively on the solutions," he says.

"It's fair to say that while we've been fearful of the next drought, no one has anticipated the severity of the current conditions or the challenges facing not only inland towns but also Sydney. What is needed is less blame and a more collaborative approach to solutions." says Cr Medcalf

"The legacy from this drought should be a whole of government approach to finally getting the shovels in the ground and the policy settings right," says Cr Medcalf

ENDS: For comment please contact:

Cr John Medcalf 0429 937 248; Cr Reg Kidd 0407 892 614; Cr Bill West 0429 990 085