

# Media Release

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## **Bartlett puts Australian Government irrigation funding at risk**

David Bartlett's grand announcement that Tasmania will become the "food bowl of the nation" and will turn "dry plains" and "degrading soils" into "productive farm lands" continues the Labor Government's ten year habit of using rhetoric and hyperbole instead of well thought out agricultural policy.

The Tasmanian Conservation Trust has been trying for six months without success to get answers as to why the State Government wants to invest \$220 million into 'drought-proofing' projects mainly in the north-east but have largely ignored the parched south-east. Why was the Coal River Valley ignored for so long?

"The Premier continues this policy aversion by announcing low interest loans for irrigation infrastructure in the absence of any policy directing where this support will be most productive, prior to the finalisation of the Tasmanian Sustainable Yields Project and prior to the completion of the Tasmanian Innovation Strategy trumpeted by the Premier" said TCT spokesperson Peter McGlone.

"It seems like research and policy is always trailing a long way behind the Government's decision-making and we will undoubtedly see money wasted on irrigation projects built in areas that are not in the greatest need, or will not have water to supply them, as well as causing avoidable environmental damage."

The Premier also confirmed the timelines for government-funded irrigation projects but the State Government is yet to receive a dollar of the \$140 million promised by the Australian Government.

"The Premier's announcement may put at risk the provision of Australian Government funding as negotiations over funding conditions are still continuing."

The Australian Government Minister for Climate Change and Water Penny Wong has repeatedly stated in the Federal Parliament that funding to the Tasmanian Government would be conditional on Tasmania's commitment to implementation of the National Water Initiative (NWI).

"Now mid-way through these negotiations the Premier has announced provision of credit for farmers for more irrigation projects that may be counter to the NWI's requirements to integrate environmental and other public benefit outcomes with irrigation development."

**Peter McGlone**

**Phone: 6234 3552, Mobile: 0406 380 545**