
Latrobe River Irrigators Inc (LRI) gain support from the National Party at state conference in two motions

At last week's Nationals state conference (12/12/2020) the state council voted in support of the Latrobe River Irrigators with the following two motions:

“That this conference supports the use of Latrobe river water for Agricultural Production and the placement of a moratorium on filling coal mines with additional irrigation water or environmental flows.”

“That this conference encourages the development of additional irrigation opportunities in Gippsland, including through the utilisation of allocated but unused water entitlements in the Latrobe system and the expansion of high value horticulture to encourage the growth of industry and jobs in the region.”

Chairman Angus Zilm said *“This is a great show of support for not just existing irrigators along the Latrobe River concerned about water security, but also the environment and the wider Gippsland Agricultural sector whom are the largest employer in the Wellington Shire”*.

Latrobe River Irrigators (LRI) are concerned that pristine water from the Latrobe River catchment will be used for a dead end purpose that is filling mine voids, instead of growing food and fibre for a growing domestic and international market. This water could instead be used to increase Gippsland's economic output and create jobs for Gippsland residents.

LRI echoes the findings of the briefing paper put out by Environment Victoria on the 10/12/20 which finds there is simply not enough water to rehabilitate the coal mines with water from the Latrobe river catchment in a drying climate scenario. Hazelwood mine alone will require more than 6 x the volume of water currently held in Blue Rock Dam just to fill the mine, let alone the ongoing maintenance to combat upward of 8 GL per year of evaporation (15GL across all three mines). The question is - What is the highest and best use for the water in the Latrobe River catchment in 2020/21, is it mine voids **or** is it humanitarian purposes, food production, jobs and environmental flows..?

IRI have recently had a large amount of interest from local and interstate based vegetable farmers who are interested in investing into the area but only where there is good quality, high reliable irrigation water. It is not surprising as Gippsland has lots to offer with:

- ✓ Close access to markets via dual lane highway,
- ✓ Two hours to Melbourne and an international port,
- ✓ A mild climate
- ✓ Quality water availability



The support from The National Party coincides with this Thursdays (17/12/20) meeting with SRW and RM Consulting Group (RMCG) which will hear from all irrigation farmers (both existing and potential) about the opportunity to convert dry land farmland into more intensive irrigation farming practices. All farmers & potential investors are welcome to attend to discuss the opportunities they see with their own property and the area (via RSVP only).

For more information about this event or to RSVP, please contact Angus Zilm on 0419 184 968.

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