

# SRI Update

08/09/2020



As we gallop into spring it has been a pretty hectic time here on the SRI front. There has been a lot going on from an advocacy point of view and we have a pretty busy month ahead of us.

Last week water minister Keith Pitt announced there would be no more water buybacks and while the 450GL and 605GL are still on the table the water won't be coming from the productive pool. There is still a lot of concern around Menindee and we will be keeping a close eye on what is happening there. While Mr Pitt's conference was a step in the right direction and a change in thinking for the first time in many years, there is still a long way to go and with any government announcement, we will have to see how it all unfolds.

We continue to meet regularly with MIL and continue to bring forth your concerns. The meetings do appear to be closing some of the communication gap. There was quite a bit of angst surrounding the roll out of this year's supplementary water event and MIL were made well aware of irrigator feedback and they will be investigating ways to improve the process in the future.

And it looks like at the end of the month we might have an opportunity to sit at the table with Angus Houston - after welcoming him into his new role, Angus is apparently touring the region at the end of September.

From Mr Houston's letter;

'As we proceed with the important work of implementing complex water reform, I intend to spend significant time listening and learning about different basin issues that confront people and communities across the Murray-Darling Basin. Irrigators from the Southern Riverina will be valuable to this process' - we will hold him to his sentiment.

## What's happening?

In September, Chris and Darcy are heading off to Sydney to meet with representatives of the legislative council.

Council will be voting on a motion to dismiss a regulation lodged by Minister Pavey in February 2020 which gave her power to lift the flood plain harvesting embargo, create a new class of water known as 'passive take' and grant an amnesty for FPH (without a license this is a breach of the criminal act).

Voting is September 25 and SRI are pushing to have the regulation thrown out and the process declared illegal, putting an end to FPH. Irrigators seeking licenses will have to work within the existing guidelines which cap total NSW FPH usage at 210GL and any earth works completed without the appropriate works permits post 2008 be declared illegal and pulled out.

It is extremely important this regulation gets knocked on the head and Chris and Darcy will be pushing hard for this outcome, early signs show there is strong support behind SRI's push and a win with this regulation will be a significant victory for us all.

An example of the absolute disregard for downstream basin users is shown NSW Planning Industry and Environment figures for 2019-20 for the Barwon-Darling Valley - unregulated river water usage was an astounding 473,666MI shared amongst a very small group of around 5 or 6 irrigators— greed and theft of this magnitude must be stopped.



Figure 1 Lake Pamamaroo, Menindee 09.07.2020

This water would normally flow through the system at Menindee, down the Darling and contribute to 39 per cent of the 1850GL required at the South Australian border as part of the Murray Darling Basin Agreement. With the Darling offline this contribution is then picked up by NSW and Vic irrigators who must make up the shortfall – directly affecting your allocation.

## CLASS ACTION MEETINGS

There will be a series of five meetings across the footprint updating NSW general security license holders on the position of the class action against the MDBA.

There has been some confusion and miss information surrounding the action and these meetings will be the perfect point of call to update – some license holders might think they are registered but might not be, while others might be looking for more information before signing. Tim Horne will be in attendance to answer any questions along with Chris Brooks and lead litigate John Doyle.

<b>Tuesday, September 8</b>	<b>Wednesday, September 9</b>	<b>Thursday, September 10</b>
3pm - Finley RSL Club	3pm - Caldwell Hall	3pm - Deniliquin RSL
7pm - Berrigan Football Club Rooms	7pm - Wakool Club	

## MURRAY DARLING ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE AND WEBINAR

September 14-16, 2020

It's a bit like a list of Australia's most wanted when it comes to water and poor policy making but Sophie will be attending the Murray Darling Association virtual online webinar next week which includes, amongst a long list of guest speakers, NFFs Fiona Simson, deputy PM Michael McCormack, Water Minister Keith Pitt, MDBA Phillip Glyde and CEWH Jody Swirepik. If you have any questions you would like to put forward, please send through and I will try my best.

## SUBMISSIONS

Darcy put a lot of great work into the National Water Reform Productivity Commissions Issues paper (National Water Initiative). Our submission is strong, detailed and more importantly backed up with facts and figures and it will be very hard to refute the logic.

The ACCC submission has now been postponed to October which will give us a bit more time. The initial findings from the ACCC report were positive and water minister Keith Pitt said in a recent press conference, Government will be closely looking at the findings from this. Rest assured we will be in there battling hard for our region and we will again put forward another strong submission.

There is also an IPART (Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal) submission into fees and pricing across the basin and we will be taking part in that as well.

## Southern Connected Irrigators and Communities (SCIC)

We are working hard to get this group up and running. We have a logo and are in the process of incorporating the entity and electing positions. From an advocacy point of view SCIC will be powerful, representing irrigators, business and community across 13 different organisations across NSW and Victoria. We have strong plans to make this group a real force to be reckoned with. Eventually we hope the reach will stretch into South Australia and even Queensland and that we can be a true reflection of basin communities.

## MURRAY REGIONAL STRATEGY GROUP (MRSG)

The MRSG is in the process of a face lift. After two years involvement with council, council chose to seek their own funding through RAMJO and put out their own paper without MRSG consultation. While it did cover some good points, MRSG are looking to sever ties with council. Groups involved in the future will include SRI, West Corugan, MIL, MVPD, RGA and Yarkuwa. The group is looking to employ someone in a permanent capacity to try and have more impact in the advocacy space and SRI have agreed to contribute \$5000 for the first 12 months and then reassess future involvement.

## SPEAK UP CAMPAIGN

To keep the social media impact of Speak Up going, SRI have agreed to fund the campaign to the tune of \$1000 for the next 12 months.

## LLOYDS WALK FOR WATER

Lloyd is still determined to continue with his walk. He is hoping it will be some time this year but in these crazy times of COVID-19 he still can't commit to a date. SRI has purchased 50 Eureka flags and we would like to see them start to go up on farms on the NSW side of the river. The flag represents a water rebellion and have been popping up on farm across northern Victoria over the last six months- again this is unity issue and a sign of solidarity.



## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Our magazine Food for Thought has been completed and looks amazing. The pictures and stories are



Figure 2 Brett and Jo Wright in their Canola Crop (June, 2020)

powerful and really illustrate what a resourceful, hardworking, diverse range of farmers we have in this region. I think it will have a positive impact on those who read it and it will show our politicians what an important region we are, not just from an economic perspective but also socially and environmentally. Thank you to all of you who welcomed us into your world, had a chat and allowed us to take a few photos and I look forward to getting it out there for you all to see.

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