

SRI Update

14/10/2020



As most of you are busily preparing for harvest or racing around baling hay, life hasn't slowed down in the world of water either. Things are as hectic as ever with flood plain harvesting, Justin Fields disallowance motion, NRAR, water transparency, land holder meetings and IPART taking up a significant amount of time.

Our wonderful magazine Food For Thought has been published and the feedback we have received to date has been very positive. The magazine looks great and shows the true face and the many great stories of the farmers behind our region. We will be handing out hard copies at each of the up and coming land holder meetings.

We also have our eye on upgrading the SRI website to make it more appealing and user friendly. We envisage the site to become a place where our shareholders can not only find all the latest information but also a place featuring and profiling our farming families – please do not hesitate to contact me if you have a general on farm story, are trialling something new, having a farm day or just have a great picture or story you would like to share.



Figure 1: 1m high Spectre wheat crop, Barooga

What's happening?

DISALLOWANCE MOTION

As you would all be well aware independent senator Justin Fields disallowance motion into Water Minister Melinda Pavey's amendment to flood plain harvesting made it through the upper house late September. With support from labour, shooters, the greens and the animal justice party the disallowance got up 22-16 putting a huge smile on the Chairs face (see pic below) And while we might have won the war and FPH is now illegal without a license and metering according to the Water Management Act, the battle is only just beginning. Water Minister Pavey, NRAR and NSW DPIE have all gone to ground while we are pushing for action as publicly as we can. We have written a



Figure 2: SRI Chair Chris Brooks listening to disallowance motion

series of letters to the MDBA, NRAR and DPIE outlining our concerns and demanding action. Landholders can help by sending a letter to. We have made it easy by putting together some letter templates for you to download. These can be found in our special update 8 October 2020 and emailing the letter to the addresses in the post. Dont forget to personalise the letter with your own details. It is essential we keep pressure on and hold this government and department to account, after all we have been licensed, metered and basin compliant for years – northern NSW have had their 20 years of free water grab and it is time they came under the same rules as the rest of us.

NATURAL RESOURCES ACCESS REGISTER (NRAR)

According to the website, the Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) has been established as an independent, transparent and effective regulator with the total carriage of the compliance and enforcement of water legislation in NSW (incidentally they are funded by water levies paid by licensed and metered irrigators in the south and not those in the north). SRI have sent numerous letters to NRAR requesting them to make public their position on the legality of flood plain harvesting and enforcement considering works orders for storages have now expired and by law should be decommissioned.

MEETING WITH ANGUS HOUSTON



Figure 3: Image of MDBA Chair Sir Angus Houston meeting with Riverina Farmers

At the start of October Chris and Sophie met with MDBAs Chair Sir Angus Houston and CE Phillip Glyde. This was the first time in Mr Glyde's four years tenor he had taken the time to sit down with SRI. Chris Brooks honoured the occasion by turning up in a dinner jacket. And while the meeting was essentially for Sir Houston, Chris had robust discussions with Mr Glyde around the legality of flood plain harvesting in the north and become more assertive in taking a stance on this issue. It became apparent that Mr Glyde was unaware of the 210GI cap on FPH. Both Mr

Glyde and Sir Houston were made aware of the negative impacts the basin plan has had on the \$6 billion agricultural industry, community and the environment and they were put on notice that we would take further action if the mismanagement continues. Debate swirled around WSPs, caps and water down the Darling and it was certainly an action-packed hour. Despite the hammering the MDBA received, Sir Angus Houston committed to returning to the region in the new year. The MDBA also visited the dairy farm of Lachlan and Adam Marshall at Blighty. The Marshall family look forward to seeing some solutions to the issues discussed during this meeting.

CLASS ACTION UPDATE

A series of well attended meetings were held to update Murray NSW general security water holders on the current position of the class action. Feedback has been positive and to date 1000 people have signed up as part of the action. The MDBA have filed their defence and lawyers are in the process of responding to the defence. These meetings have highlighted some confusion around the expression of interest paperwork and the documents needed to sign up to be part of the class action. If you are in any doubt as to whether you have signed up please contact Tim Horne on 02 9159 9010, tim@hornelegal.com.au or Amanda Banton on 02 8076 8090, amanda.banton@bantongroup.com



Figure 4: SRI Chair Chris Brooks presenting at Class Action meeting in Deniliquin

NSWIC

John Lolicato, Darcy Hare and Sophie Baldwin met with NSWIC interim CEO Claire Miller in Barham as Claire was in the area and requested a meeting. Claire acknowledged past behaviour of NSWIC refusing to support southern basin issues but had little to offer us moving forward. If nothing else, she would like to keep lines of communication open in the future. It was interesting to note NSWIC came out in a Weekly Times opinion piece not long after saying NSW Murray general security licence holders are bearing the burden of water reform impacts not consistent with National Water Initiative principles but in the same article contradicted the opening by blaming climate change as the reason Menindee no longer filled, northern basin storage is only 1450GL (our studies show 4000GL) and take in the north has always been metered and measured suffice to say SRI will continue down our own path for advocacy.

LLOYDS WALK FOR WATER/EUREKA FLAGS

It's looking like Lloyd will be hitting the track in November. He plans to walk from Barham to the Hume Dam over three weeks with plans to stop and talk to people along the way. As a fundraiser SRI have been selling Eureka Flags which have been adopted by irrigators as a sign of water rebellion. The flags are an initiative of north Vic and are starting to pop up over the border in NSW and are a sign of unity across the basin. Cost is \$50, contact admin@southernriverinairrigators.com.au if you would like one for your place.

HELEN DALTONS WATER REGISTER

It was disappointing to note Helen Dalton's Water Management Amendment (Water Rights Transparency) Bill 2020 (No 2) was again defeated. The bill was first introduced in Feb 2020 and passed through the Upper House in August with labor, SFF, greens, animal justice, one nation and independents all in support. The National Party and Liberals opposed the bill on the basis it violates the privacy of mum and dad farmers. Even with an amendment making it clear no personal details can be divulged, the Nationals and Liberals still refused to support the bill which beggars the question what are they hiding? Water transparency is an important step forward in resolving the ongoing issues with water policy.

Upcoming dates:

LANDHOLDER ASSOCIATION MEETINGS

Berriquin	Held October 6
Wakool	Wakool Club 7pm October 15. contact Kate Redfearn 0417 112 162
Denimein	Pretty Pine Hall 6.30pm October 20. contact Jon Gatacre 0428 462 117
West Berriquin	Deniliquin Sporties 7pm, October 22 contact Andrew Crossley 0428 575 801
Deniboota	To be advised contact Alistair Starritt 0429 965 357
MIL AGM	Online via virtual meeting platform 10:30am, November 25.

SRI Contacts:

SRI CEO	Sophie Baldwin 0427 503 318
SRI Chair/Berriquin Landholder Chair	Chris Brooks 0419 505 404
SRI Vice Chair/Wakool Landholder Chair	Darcy Hare 0437 794 723
SRI Treasurer/Denimein Landholder Chair	Jon Gatacre 0428 462 117
Deniboota Landholder Chair	Alistair Starritt 0429 965 357
West Berriquin Landholder Chair	Andrew Crossley 0428 575 801