

SRI Update

23/07/2020



As you are all well aware, the political will to support us in our fight for a fair go has been sorely lacking leaving us to forge our own way forward and defend our right to fair and equitable water policy for all.

Rest assured everyone at SRI is busy doing the best they can and to help keep members up to date with what is happening, we will be producing a monthly newsletter.

If any landholders have input, feedback or queries do not hesitate to put in a call to your local president or get in touch with us directly.

What's happening?

We are in the process of updating our website to let the outside world know how diverse, productive and unique we are. We also need to show the personal and heart-warming side - the families, the animals and the environment, so we can stick it to the politicians who like to label us a group of bullies.

We are also looking at producing a magazine to showcase the SRI footprint, the farmers, the families, the industry and business – a magazine to educate and something we can put directly into the hands of politicians and government departments.

Darcy and Sophie are now in regular contact with MIL in an effort to improve communication and transparency. If there is anything you would like brought up, please let us know.

SRI are currently working on a submission to the Productivity Commission Review on the National Water Initiative (NWI). The NWI is the national blueprint for water reform agreed to in 2004 by the Council of Australian Government (COAG). Essentially if the NWI was implemented in its entirety we wouldn't be in the mess we are in today as it covers the majority of issues, we are facing including flood plain harvesting, water transparency, water trading, constraints development etc. According to the website, the review is set to be completed sometime in 2021.

If you have noticed an absence from Chair Chris it is because he has been out of action after undergoing knee surgery. He is currently taking a short break and if you think he was dangerous before, wait until you see what magic he is capable of creating with two fully functioning legs, all I can say is look out Canberra.

SUBMISSIONS

On July 2, Chris and Darcy supported by Aqua Law gave evidence under oath at a virtual hearing on flood plain harvesting (**Impact and implementation of the water management (general) amendment (exemptions to flood plain harvesting) regulation 2020 (NSW).**)

Flood Plain Harvesting Facts

- FPH is significantly impacting allocation in the Southern Basin.
- There are currently no FPH licenses issued in NSW.
- FPH is currently unlicensed, unmetered and consequently unlawful according to the National Water Initiative (NWI) and Basin Plan
- Only 210GL of FPH is allowed under the Basin Plan – on farm storages in the north are capable of holding in excess of 4000GL.
- Minister Pavey claims FPH took 20GL of water out of the system after she implemented a pumping embargo during early February after heavy rains in the area. The DPIE upped the figure to 30GL, work from Slattery and Johnson indicates the actual figure is closer to 900GL – if this water did flow through the system it would have equated to 720GL at the SA border and resulted in a 21.5 per cent GSA for NSW irrigators.
- To reduce legality, Minister Pavey implemented a new type of water labelled 'passive take' to allow water to be taken from the system without fear of prosecution.
- SRI continue to maintain, according to law a take is a take no matter water it is called, and this process still remains unlawful.
- The basin cannot continue to operate under two sets of rules- a compliant system in the south, unmetered and in compliant in the north.
- Extensive work by water consultants Slattery and Johnson (funded by SRI) has uncovered prior to the year 2000, Wilcannia had an average flow of 6500GL of water, the last two decades that average has dropped to 2500GL. The government's own NIC report shows dams constructed in the north total 4200GL indicating there is much, much, much more water stolen from the system than alleged by the water minister.

SRI says flood plain harvesting is cheating the south of water



Andrew Miller
@journandy26

14 Jul 2020, 8:36 a.m.

Water



Water Bill Inquiry

With Darcy at the helm, SRI presented a 12-page written submission on:

- 1) [Constitution Amendment \(Water Accountability and Transparency\) Bill 2020](#) and
- 2) [Provisions of the Water Management Amendment \(Transparency of Water Rights\) Bill 2020](#) and

The current water register, WaterNSW is deliberately opaque. As per the NWI you cannot access details around ownership without first knowing the exact Water Access License (WAL) The critical point here is WAL numbers do not directly say who owns water, a fact at odds with the governing legislation.

As detailed in the Water Act 2007- *All trades should be recorded on a water register. Registers will be compatible, publicly accessible and reliable, recording information on a whole of catchment basis, consistent with the National Water Initiative.*” [3]

Changes by Helen Daltons are consistent with NWI objectives of accountability and transparency, while Water Minister Pavey wants changes to include non-retrospective ownership and political partners to be exempt from disclosure.

3) Water Management Amendment (Water Allocations - Drought Information) Bill 2020

This amendment must be tailored region by region – a blanket approach is unfair and unacceptable. Critical human needs in the Murray do not need adjustment because minimum inflow determinations were introduced in 2007 and have delivered 100 per cent allocation to conveyance and critical human needs all the way from Dartmouth to Lake Alexandrina before allocations move from zero.

The conservative approach already in place could be compounded even further and result in lower allocations with more water set aside for reserves, later allocation and more carry over and less productive water used overall, due to loss from spills and greater storage volumes.

Southern Connected Irrigators and Communities

SCIC is a newly formed organisation designed as a sign of solidarity and unity across southern basin irrigators. A large and united group with significant basin representation, all calling for the same thing will increase credibility and help with advocacy issues moving forward. Currently representing 13 organisations, progress is well underway to form a legal entity with a goal to achieve a united, common sense approach to water management.

Groups involved in SCIC include: Southern Riverina Irrigators, Central Murray Floodplain Irrigation Group, Murray Valley Private Divertors, Northern Victorian Irrigators and Communities, Murrumbidgee Valley Food and Fibre, Murrumbidgee Industry and Agriculture Communities, Speak Up Campaign,

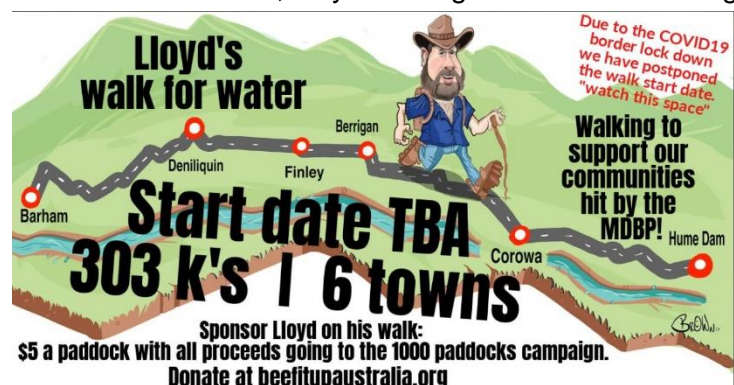
Upper Goulburn River Catchment Association, West Corrugan Private Irrigators District, Sunraysia Citrus Growers, Sunraysia Horticulture Industry, Darling River Action Group and Yanco Creek and Tributaries Advisory Council.

Lloyds Walk for Water

Editor of the Barham Bridge Newspaper, farmer and water activist, Lloyd Polkinghorne will be walking 303 km from his hometown of Barham to the Hume Dam at Albury.

And while the starting date of mid-August has now been postponed due to COVID-19, the walk will go ahead at a future date to be advised.

As part of the 14 day walk, Lloyd will talk to members of the community about the impact of poor water policy and the Basin



Plan. He is also hoping people will join in and walk a few kilometres alongside him.

North Vic irrigators are also jumping on board and will host their own walk along the Victorian side.

Lloyd is also raising funds for Beef it Up Australia- a farming charity that supports rural communities by hosting free events in country towns.

As a sign of solidarity SRI have purchased 50 Eureka Flags and will be distributing them amongst landholders for a fee that will be donated back to Beef it Up.



The Eureka Flags signify a water rebellion and are an initiative from Nth Vic Irrigators – we would like the flags to become a familiar sight across NSW and especially along Lloyds path, anything to continue to draw attention to the plight of water while showing unity amongst irrigators.

CEO Appointment

Sophie Baldwin has been appointed to the new role of chief executive officer.

As SRI has grown, advocacy levels have increased, and the consequent workload has warranted a full-time position to help take some of the pressure and work off Darcy and Chris.

Sophie is a former northern Victorian dairy farmer and rural journalist.

She has a strong passion for rural communities and understands the importance of fighting for agriculture and water. She admits she has a lot to learn as she transitions into her new role, but she is looking forward to the challenge and is honoured to be representing the NSW irrigation community.

Her role will include helping with advocacy, co-ordinating, liaising and keeping Chris out of jail.

She can be contacted on 0427 503 318 or email ceo@southernriverinairrigators.com.au

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