

Frances Pietroboni 22-8-2020



Director

Murray-Darling Basin Inquiry

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission

Dear Director

Re ACCC Murray-Darling Basin Water market inquire

Australian History is so important to know what we had before irrigation.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1817 John Oxley was our first explores to explore the Riverina, on arriving at Mt Brogden near the township of Yenda today, Oxley describe our area a country of desolation, drought and bareness

**Australian's Constitution – 100. Nor abridge right to use water**

The Commonwealth shall not, by any law or regulation of trade or commerce, abridge the right of a State or of the residents therein to the reasonable use of waters of rivers for conservation or irrigation.

**State Labour Government! The Water Acts of 1905 state ownership of all water resource;**

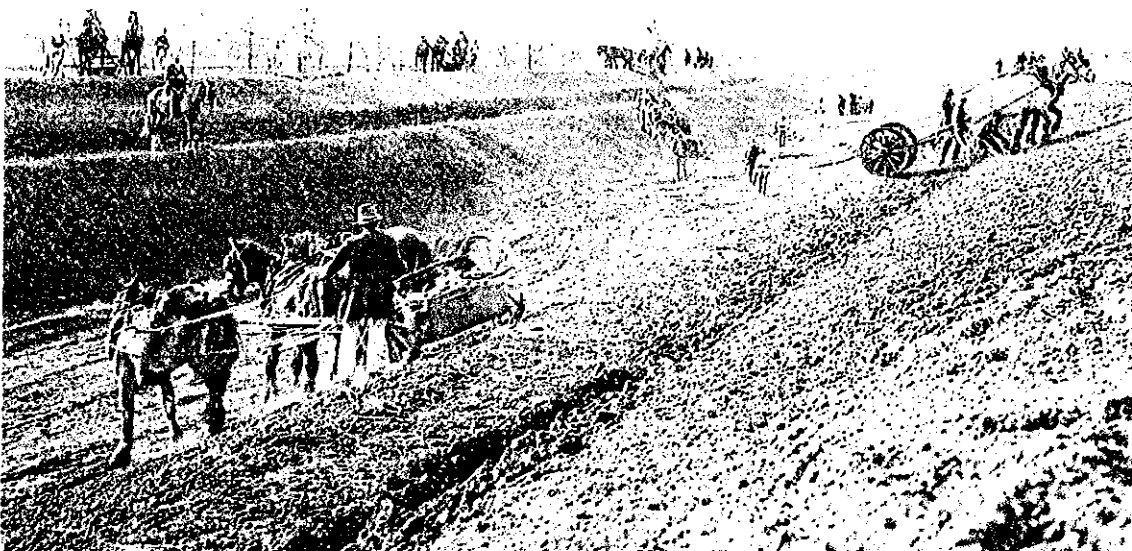
**Administration of the Burrinjuck dam system by three Commissioners, to be independent of politic and parliament, and water of the western rivers are a great public resource which must be placed under public control to protect the public welfare.**

The Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area has to thank those men of visions who came up with the plan to irrigate the area, but before irrigation came, government of the day had to come up with a plan to build a dam to store water, for the area was prone to drought , and Western Riverina country could only carry one sheep per four acres, the first reported area to produce a crop of wheat was near Coolamon in 1850, and most settlers stayed close to the

river and creeks, and in 1882 – 1884 three years of drought.... 1895 to 1903 nine years of drought, and in 1906 the minister for public works introduce into parliament the Barren Jack and Murrumbidgee canals Construction Bill.

In 1910 Labour won government and James McGowan pass an enabling act in December 1910 Murrumbidgee Irrigation Act, and Barren Jack.

The construction of the dam and canal proceed very slow for 4 years, and the main canal was built by using manual labor with teams of horses. Yanco No 1 irrigation was officially open on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 1912 and the first of 146 farms were gazette, 76 were of 50 acres, 43 of 10 acres and 27 less than 2 acres.



Excavation of the main canal by horse at Beelbangera near Griffith.

Photographer from John Newland collection

## Murrumbidgee irrigation area

### Here comes the Bailiff a true story 1914

Here comes the Bailiff a true story of a return soldier in 1914 -18, and a city girl who fell in love and married a man who loved the land. Doris Cheesbrough.

The newly opened Murrumbidgee irrigation, where return; men establish their own fruit farms. Before irrigation there were sheep and cattle carcasses lying all over the place on account of drought.

Many soldiers were disillusioned as they tried to make a living, the blocks were too small and many were more fortunate. Ted had a go at growing fruit, but times were hard to supplement his income he played the piano at Yenda picture theatre silent movies.

Reclassification Committee was set up and recommendation redesigning of farms and additional area. And many had lost their spirit.

Doris's mother gave the advice that marriage is for love, but one does not expect everything to be perfect, and what a time to become engaged. Ted was to forfeit his fruit farm and move to the city Sydney.

It seemed that most of the fruit farms were redesigned and were beginning to produce fruit.

After the initial struggle the M.I.A. there was a golden opportunity for any man to be on the land and have a go at growing rice.

The Irrigation Commission would advance, expenses, and advance three pounds a week, and advance working and harvesting expenses, and in return they would have a mortgage on the growing rice crop, and leave what was left over for the grower.

Ted told Doris he purchase a farm, and it's off the beaten track, dead end of the road, up against the Mirrool Creek Branch Canal, this chap is a good old pioneer type who took the land up in the early days- flowed the water, soon after the Burrinjuck Dam was built,, he has been in dairy, but has not done much good, too far out of town he said, and he was going into growing fruit. Ted said here is no limit to the place "absolutely drought proof" just the climate – hot as blazes for growing rice, we will be able to irrigate every inch of the place it is as flat as a board, and the stock can be fattened up.

In 1928 Griffith has commenced to grow, two new hotels – new shops and Shire Council had been proclaimed that year, and Ted was able to up a light utility for five pounds deposit, Ted said we have to easy on our living expense of three pounds a week, and I picked up straw mattress dirt cheap for us to sleep on, and deck-chairs we might get tired of sitting on boxes, and a hanging meat safe.

We travelled half way to Yenda, at Bilbul Post Office, Ted turned right, the powdery red dust rose in chocking clouds; The House our home had two small windows and a door, the outside was undress timber, cracked and holey, and the ceiling unlined, and a rainwater tank, and closed by was a muddy dam, to draw water for washing, looking towards one direction Griffith and the other direction Yenda, and stretched the lonely miles of distance of desolation, a lonely place for a city girl, and the neighbor's miles away, no phone, no electricity and a fire wood stove to cook on. The success of growing rice was working long hours early in the morning till dusk, seven days a week, week after week, and the window of opportunity to sow rice was October.

I would like to acknowledge the wonderful story Here Comes the Bailiff. By Doris Cheesbrough.

We have come a long way since the early days, what we have today is that growing rice has become too expensive on account of the price of water, the drought of 2007 when the Commonwealth Government came up the Murray Darling Basin Plan to buy water from irrigators for the environment.

Our Dams were built to drought proof inland, Burrinjuck, for the M.I A. Blowering Coleambally, Wyangala on the Lachlan River, Hume for the Murray and Dartmouth dam.

Water allocation for NSW Irrigators for the start of season 0% 1-7-2019.

South Australia water allocation stands at 100%.



1923 Banna Avenue Griffith (From State water photo collection)

### **Trading Rain like shares**

In 1999 Victoria consulting economists came up with a report that recommended that (rain) water be traded like shares, and to separate ownership of land and water, Under the proposed new trading framework, water entitlements could be held by any person or entity, they will not need to own land and water.

Too many decisions made by consultants, they do not have to live with their decision. Irrigators do.

**Water as become a business to be traded and sold, and how does one trade rain that comes from the sky? And it is free.**

The big drought 2001 to 2010 9 years. Minister for the environment in 2007 Malcom Turnbull came up with the Murray Daring Basin Plan for the environment.



The Water ACT relied for its constitutional validity on an international treaty, the RAMSAR Convention on Wetlands, which takes its name from the small Iranian town where it was signed in 1971. The Ramsar Convention obliges governments to manage and conserve designated wetlands, sixteen of which are in the Murray-Darling Basin.

In 1982 - 1983 Australia was in drought and the Blowering dam ran empty.

The Hawke government in 1983 went to the High Court to stop the construction of the Tasmanian Dam. The commonwealth found the ruling that it could use its external affairs power to give effect to international treaties, particularly those conserving the environment.

2001-2010 drought. Farmers were desperate after the drought, many irrigators sold their water to the Commonwealth, people were on their knees with debt, and Labour buyback of water from irrigators, city base media and politicians they did not understand, that there is less water to share in the basin communities

In 2010 the rain came and everything came to life fish, spiders, birds, and the frogs that came out in their thousands in the rice field.

2012 Yenda, Yoogali and Griffith were in flood, NSW and Victoria.

Ownership of water (rain) Australia a country of flooding rains, drought, and bushfire.

**People have the right to know who owns (rain) water, in has been said that in principle we do. Theoretically, Australians own the rain that falls in Australia, that rain becomes a lake, river and streams that flow over the land, and underground water that flows beneath it.**

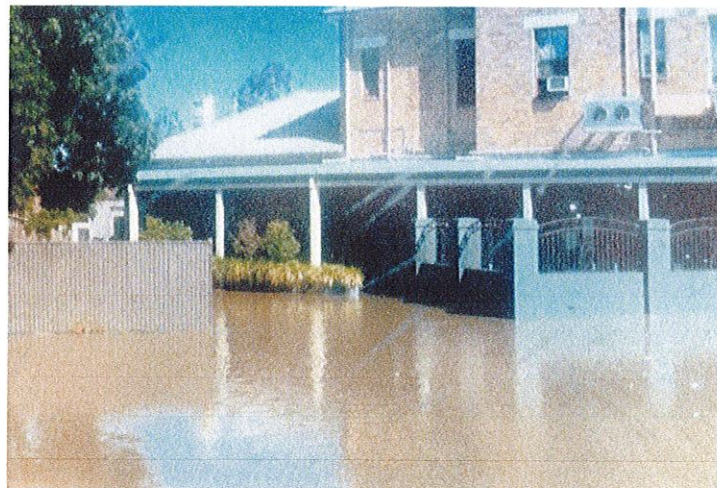
**That's our water. Its our common property, our birthright, and water stored in dams to drought proof the country.**

Before the dams were built, there were no environmental water, the environment looked after itself.

Please find true stories of people who made a life in the MIA in the early years, and Newspaper clipping in regard to the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

Yours Sincerely

Floods waters- 2012 Yenda Town.



20/04/2019

Fran Pietroboni

  
Editor

The Area News

Dear Editor

*Frogs and water came together in the MIA*

*In November 1944 a long period of drought, and strong wind brought the dust bellowing all day, and at night the windows and doors were left open, and in the morning the air was full of dust, and then a shower of rain came at 3pm and cleared the air and it brought the temperature down.*

*Anna Cunial (nee Ceccato) tells the story of the dust storm that came in wave after wave and it lasted one week, we had to light a lamp in the house during the day to see and it was hard to breath, the dust storm die off and then came back some days later.*

*Anna said during her school holidays the plague of grass hoppers that came through Griffith and at Yoogali, Wards orange farm that was situated on Conner of McCormack road, and Yenda road, the grass hoppers ate everything in their path, the orange trees were stripped of their leaves, then left and went onto Yenda and Binya Hills, and found nothing to eat, came back to Yoogali and ate the rest of the oranges stems, we did not go to school for a week.*

*On October 2011 Anna celebrated her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, Anna had a little green frog on her birthday cake, and Anna thanked the year she was born, the irrigation water came to the MIA and also the frogs. Without water, we would not have our frogs today, (Water and frogs go hand in hand together)*

*We should all learn from our passed history, and thank those who made Griffith what it is today.*

Yours Sincerely



History has a habit of repeating itself  
Murray Valley irrigators

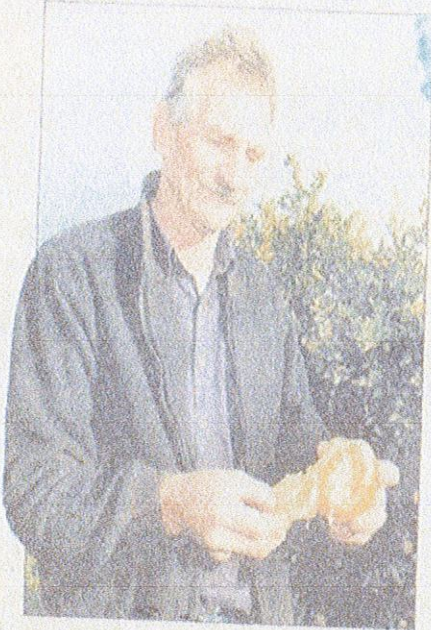
The Rural News, Friday, October 22, 1999 — 3



Murray Valley irrigators showed just how precious water is to their district when an army of about 4000 protesters marched along the Hume Highway at Albury early this week. Children and adults carrying placards aired their concerns for the future of their valley. Their worst fear – lack of water for the approaching irrigation season. The farmers, in the wake of reduced water allocations, want 300 gigalitres of rescue water from the Snowy Hydro Scheme to be released, at a reasonable price, in time to sow their rice crops before it is too late. Placards at the rally reading “You Want Food? We Want Water”, “No Water, No Future” were held by farmers chanting “We want water, we want a fair deal”.

22<sup>nd</sup> October 1999 Murray Valley Irrigators protesting - we want a future with water, no water no future





# The water lottery

THE southern end of the Murray-Darling Basin has experienced unprecedented drought since 1997. MATTHEW CAWOOD travelled along the Murray and its tributaries, from the mountains to Mildura, to compile a series of special reports. Rather than despair about the present, he reports on how the region's agriculture is looking at ways to deal with new realities.



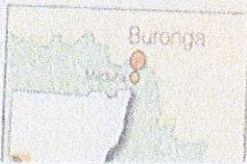
## They're staying put at Buronga

ON ALL sides of the citrus orchard that Kevin Cocks's family has run at Buronga since 1958, the water has been sold off the farms.

The Buronga scheme, just across the Murray River from Mildura, has lost six of its original 26 irrigation farms, as people decide that cashing in their water entitlements offers a better future than grappling with reduced water allocations and fickle produce markets.

But Mr Cocks and his wife Vicki are staying, and their son Nathan has now come home to join them.

"We've been in the business long enough, and I think Australia needs the food that



AUSTRALIA'S irrigation maps are being redrawn by water trading, but nobody knows which areas are set to win or lose.

The Federal Government's multi-billion dollar environmental buyback program has heightened a fundamental insecurity about water trading, that it can be useful for individual farmers, but potentially fatal for communities built on water if that water goes elsewhere.

All the drought-afflicted irrigation communities of southern Australia are worried about which side of the ledger they will end up on, but perhaps none as acutely as Murray Irrigation, the largest of them all.

selling are either desperate to retire debt, or need the money for business restructuring.

Mr Ellis expected the deal to be stitched up in March.

That was before the NSW State Government, spooked by the volumes of water the State was losing to the Federal Government's water buyback, slapped an embargo on permanent water sales last month.

Despite some lengthy meetings in the past week, that embargo is still in effect.

If and when it is lifted, Mr Ellis expects a lot of water will quickly leave MI.

So far, about 50,000 megalitres of the company's 1.7 million ML bulk buyback have left the area.

Australia's irrigation maps are being redrawn by water trading, but nobody knows which areas are set to win or lose, drought effected irrigation communities, it is the farmer who is the loser, they farm a living thing, cattle, sheep, or produce food, water is gods gift,



# The Area News

IN NEWSPAPER SINCE 1923

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2010

PRICE: \$1.30

## Foreign investors line up for water

ALMOST a fifth of the MIA's water has been permanently removed from the region with fears cashed-up foreign companies are poised to snatch even more.

Just weeks out from the release of the guide to the future-shaping Murray-Darling Basin Plan, it has been revealed international investors - who have already



ploughed hundreds of millions of dollars into the Australian water market - were planning a further

assault once the plan was finalised.

In this area alone, 18 per cent of water entitlements have been snapped-up by the government and outside investors.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg, according to local businessman and chamber of commerce spokesman Paul Pierotti, who said permanent water trading was an

attack on the future viability of the region.

"Would these foreign investors be buying water if they didn't think it would seriously increase in value; of course not," Mr Pierotti said.

"Once the (Murray-Darling) plan is released and once the government

Continued Page 5

The Murray Darling Basin Plan has failed farming irrigators

Almost a fifth of the MIA's water has been permanently removed from the region with fears cashed-up foreign companies are poised to snatch even more

Australia remain one of the only countries in the world who sell water entitlements to overseas investors



### **Sunrice 2010-11**

Sunrice Australian own RICE Company was under threat. Spanish company Elbro, take over deal of \$600 million on the table. Shares holder there are 2 classes of shares, class A and class B, Shares holders voted against the take over from Elbro.

### **2012 - 2013**

Sunrice has received for the year 2013 a record crop of rice.

Strong paddy rices the price around per tonne of \$270 to an upward price of \$317 for Medium grain. Sunrise consolidated revenue for the year 2012 to 30 April 2013 of \$1 billion.

Farmers create the wealth out side the farm gate, and Money goes back into the communities -- \$300 million payment to growers.

Victorian Government has up dated new work on the railway line from Deniliquin to Melbourne to be able to transport 300.000 tonnes of rice from Sunrice, to Melbourne for export

The return for rice growers for the year 2012-2013 was \$80 million, and the single desk marketing for rice. It validates the operating method for the growing of rice. The return from export of rice was \$65.9 million and growers saved \$13.5 million in freight coast with this scale advantage.

The vesting of the NSW rice crop is the best interests of growers; it means higher prices for growers.

2010 Wagga lamb sale made \$200 to \$204

Wheat price for milling wheat was \$340 to \$350 per tonne.

### **9 Years of Drought 2001---2010**

*The drought of 1895 to 1903 was 9 years and our recent drought 2001 to 2009 was also 9 years. What followed after 9 years of drought rain and more rain? Queensland, NSW, Victoria, and Western Australian had their big floods. People lost their lives in Queensland.*

Griffith After 9 years of drought the rain came, and on Gavin birthday the 21<sup>st</sup> October 2010.- Griffith had on one week end three and a half inches of rain, and the frogs came out in their hundreds, so many birds, fish, and spiders. Every thing had come to life nature has a way of looking after itself. City people do not understand that.

They do not know what it is like to pick a piece of fruit from a tree.

A fruit tree with fruit on it will try and save it self, when there is little water by dropping its fruit and then its leaves, nature has a way of saving it self.

Farmers are the big gamblers with the weather, what we have is four seasons that is climate change - Spring everything comes to life, - Summer time is the gift of fruit, - Autumn is the time when leaves turn to gold. - Winter! Dormancy is the time to sleep.

Lake Cargelligo town at the end of the big drought 2009 -2010 the drought had dried up the lake, then the rains came as floodwater travelled, and thousands of farmers remained isolated, the lake is full and life is back to normal.

Thank God.

3<sup>rd</sup> August 2012 Flood warning for the Lachlan River. The spills from Lake Cargelligo and Lake Brewster are expected to cause minor rural flooding at Hillston, and river level to rise at Booligal mid August.

Why do Australian Governments love deregulation 2011?





2011 Rice field crop



2011 Cauliflower field  
The Murray –Darling Basin Plan

Fran Pietroboni June 2011



Editor. The Area News

Banna Ave

Griffith 2680

Dear Editor Gillard government June 2011 Area News.

How many can remember in 2011 the parliament committee inquiry into the Basin Plan that came to the Yoogali club, chaired by Tony Windsor, how many people gave their submission to the committee, I was one of them who gave my submission to Tony Zappia MP, and said Yoogali had a railway station years ago, my parents arrived from Italy with the floods of 1939, and Griffith was in drought the year before.

The Gillard government ignored the recommendations of Tony Windsor's basin plan inquiring and announced another round of buy backs, just weeks after the committee called for a halt to non-strategic buybacks, two new tenders are now open in south Australia, Victoria and Queensland.

The latest round will see a further \$100 million of government's \$3.1billion program spent purchasing water to return to the environment.

On June 2, the committee delivered a scathing assessment of the program as part of a broader study of the basin plan. While the key findings were that while the buyback program can play an "important role" in water reform "it is being implemented in such a way that causes significant harm to the community viability"

The 12 members bipartisan panel proposed that if the program was to continue the government "must identify the impact that purchases will have on regional communities and infrastructure."



# Basin issue is 'high and dry'

By ROSS TYSON

HOPES the three regional independent lawmakers would use their power to negotiate a fairer deal on water are quickly evaporating.

The controversial Murray-Darling Basin plan does not appear to have seriously figured in talks between Tony Windsor, Rob Oakeshott and Bob Katter and the major parties.

The bargaining power of independents was on display last week when Tasmanian MP Andrew Wilkie secured a guaranteed \$100 million to upgrade a Hobart hospital.

But with only Mr Windsor's electorate of New England in the basin, the potentially catastrophic cuts to water allocations under the plan have not been a priority.

Willbriggie rice farmer Glen Andreazza said he was disappointed the three independents had not addressed what he considered the biggest issue facing regional Australia.

"There hasn't been much mentioned about the basin plan, or water in general, which is disappointing," Mr Andreazza said.

"If you had someone on our side I think numerous things could have happened, such as we could have got the Water Act revisited.

"They possibly will look after regional Australia to a certain extent, but certainly not on



**PRIORITIES:** Independent members Tony Windsor, Rob Oakeshott and Bob Katter have remained fairly quiet on the issue of the Murray-Darling Basin plan.

water issues by the look of it."

National Irrigators Council CEO Danny O'Brien said he had written to each of the three MPs expressing concerns about the plan, but had been unable to speak to them in person.

"We've certainly been trying, but from what we're seeing publicly it doesn't appear that there's any focus on the plan as a key issue in the negotiations," Mr O'Brien said.

"I guess the problem is that only one of them — that being Tony Windsor — has an electorate in the basin.

"We'd like to think that this is an opportunity to get some common-sense back into the debate but unfortunately — at least publicly — it does not appear to be a high-level issue for them."

With the independents widely tipped to make their decisions

this week, the chairman of the Murrumbidgee Irrigators' Council

said he believed the basin plan process could not be re-examined if the Coalition formed a minority government.

"Tony Windsor was the only person in parliament to vote against the Water Act, so he obviously knew what that was going to do to us," Mr Shaw said.

"There are plenty of people around who know that the basin plan can only lead to one thing — the depopulation of the regions."

"These independents' electorates are wildly conservative and (Opposition leader) Tony Abbott's right, he's got six members of his front bench from the regions and we've had three years of Labor and none of them have even been near the regions."

"Tony Windsor was the only person in parliament to vote against the WATER ACT. So he obviously knew, what that was going to do to us". Mr Shaw said depopulation of the regions.

# The Area News

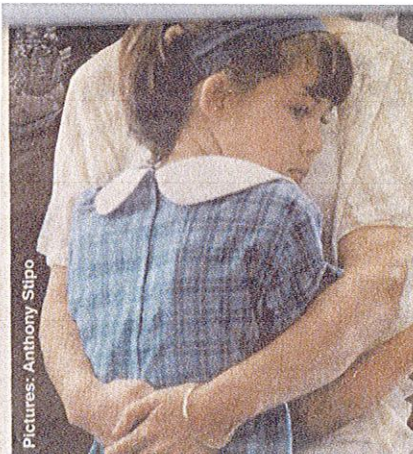
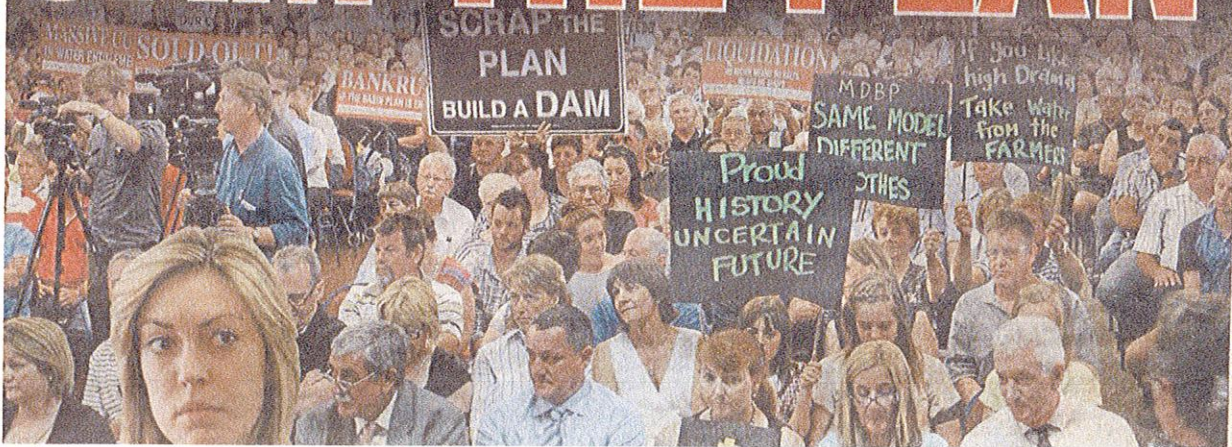
GRIFFITH'S OWN NEWSPAPER SINCE 1923

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2011

PRICE: \$1.40

## Community strikes back as 10,000 tell Tony Burke:

# JAM THE PLAN



By MELODY MONTAGUE

FOURTEEN months ago, the Griffith community asked the government to change its plan for the Murray-Darling Basin.

Yesterday, they demanded it. Close to 10,000 people crowded in and around The Yoogali Club yesterday morning to take a stand against the draft Murray-Darling Basin Plan and fight for their community.

The tone of the rally was set by the arrivals of Water Minister Tony Burke and federal opposition leader Tony Abbott.

### INSIDE THE BASIN PLAN RALLY:

- Mock funeral held: [Page 2](#)
- The human face of water cuts: [Page 3](#)
- What the people thought: [Page 4](#)
- We'll junk plan, Abbott: [Page 5](#)
- Victory for people power: [Editorial, Page 6](#)
- The rally in pictures: [Page 25](#)



Mr Burke entered the meeting to a stony silence, punctuated by a range of jeers from those gathered.

Mr Abbott was met by thunderous applause as he wound his way

through the crowd.

Those who had closed their businesses or left their farms,

[Continued Page 2](#)

**STRENGTH IN NUMBERS** (main picture): Locals united to show the government the effect its plan would have on basin communities. **LEFT:** Rachel Pisan and Sarah Culla ponder an uncertain future under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. **INSET:** A protester displays the emotion of a community with plenty to fight for.



# They're selling off the farmer

exclusive

**Steve Lewis**  
National Political  
Correspondent

FOREIGN investors are buying into Australian agriculture companies in "worrying" numbers amid warnings the nation's food security could be "compromised" by overseas businesses.

A report commissioned by the Gillard government has found high levels of foreign ownership in prime agricultural industries including sugar, grain and beef.

The nation's sugar industry has recently been targeted by the Chinese and offshore investors have also sunk massive sums into Australia's meat processing and wheat sectors.

A \$610 million Spanish takeover of Australia's dominant rice producer, Sunrice, was thwarted last June.

Some of the country's best farms are also being snapped up by overseas investors who mask their identity with complex corporate structures.

It is understood senior government ministers are drawing up plans to ensure foreign investment in Australia's prime farming assets is made more transparent.

An announcement could be made this month when the report — by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics — is expected to be released.

The ABARE report outlines the billions of dollars being paid by foreign investors for a significant stake in Australia's farming sector.

A senate inquiry which has been examining the issue is likely to conclude that Australia's ability to control food supplies will be undermined unless changes are made to foreign investment guidelines.

Since the global financial crisis, foreign ownership in Australian agriculture has exploded, with overseas buyers investing \$2.5 billion a year on average over three years.

South Australian Senator Nick Xenophon warned that Australia's food security could be compromised if laws allowing foreign investment were not tightened.

Unlike New Zealand — where any purchase of more than 5ha of land triggers government intervention — Australian laws allow investment up to \$231 million.

"We are being mugs if we don't change the rules. We have this open slather approach to foreign investment of our prime agricultural lands that makes us an international laughing stock," Senator Xenophon said.

"You can't blame the Chinese for investing here it's an open-door policy."

Liberal Senator Bill Heffernan, who is chairing the inquiry, said Australia had to plan ahead 50 years "to control our destiny and sovereign assets".

.....what knew?

The first settlers to grow wheat was at Coolamon, they did not have a plough, they ploughed the land with a stick. Drought was what our first settler had to endure, and when the rain came, they had no money to buy cattle or sheep

30th Nov 2012

# State govt unveils its rescue remedy

By MELODY MONTAGUE

THE state government has marched into the Murray-Darling Basin debate with a rescue plan for irrigation communities, announcing a cap on water buyback from January 2013.

The basin plan passed through parliament yesterday but its impact on the MIA will be limited after the NSW government enacted its promise to place a 3 per cent cap on buyback from each valley per decade.

That means the majority of the 650 gigalitres of water remaining to be recovered from the Murray-Darling system will have to be gained

## Basin Plan accepted by parliament

THE Murray-Darling Basin Plan has been accepted by parliament despite fierce opposition from several Nationals members.

Riverina MP Michael McCormack forced the legislation to a vote when he tabled a disallowance motion on

Monday night.

But without the support of the government and the Coalition, the motion was defeated yesterday afternoon, on the final day of parliament for the year.

The federal government will now negotiate with the states to implement the plan.

through improvements to infrastructure.

The cap will be put in place from January 15.

Murrumbidgee MP Adrian Piccoli said the restriction was the most significant step the NSW government could take to protect communities.

"This is what we said we would do and it reflects precisely what communities in NSW

have been asking for," Mr Piccoli said.

"It is the responsible thing to do - it means any change will be enacted over a longer period, which gives communities a chance to adjust. We need this to make sure the commonwealth doesn't take a lazy approach to the recovery of water by buying it back from farmers."

When he signed off the final basin plan less than two weeks ago, federal water minister Tony Burke placed the onus on the states to come up with ways to recover water, warning he would otherwise be forced to increase buyback. The threat had local stakeholders concerned other states would attempt to buy water from NSW if

they failed to meet their own targets under the plan.

Murrumbidgee Valley Food and Fibre Association president Debbie Buller said the NSW cap would protect communities from that risk.

"It's extremely important to prevent any government from barging in and buying up and this is exactly what we need to stop that happening," Mrs Buller said.

"It has always been a huge hole in the whole process and, if the federal government wasn't willing to fill it, I'm glad NSW was willing to protect us from inappropriate raids on our water entitlements."

SEASON STALEMATE

# diminishing water supply

By CHRIS McLENNAN

FARMERS are scrambling for every drop of irrigation water left in southern Australia.

Three water brokers this week told *The Weekly Times* the price of temporary allocations could reach \$500 a megalitre by Christmas.

The brokers say there is fierce competition for dwindling supplies.

Prices have already risen to \$250 with some water sales reaching \$300, which has forced many out of the market and some out of farming.

"A lot of people have already made the call and shut up shop," Goulburn-Murray Water's Torrumbarry water services committee chair Guy Duncan said.

Mr Duncan agrees \$500 a megalitre "is entirely possible".

"Cattle will be sold off significantly in the next month but the conundrum is do you pay high prices for water or buy in fodder, or just downsize and ride it out," he said.

RuralCo Water general manager Phil Grahame said some croppers would sell water rather than grow a crop.

**"A lot of people have already made the call and shut up shop"**

"The dairy guys will buy in hay and grain rather than grow their own pasture because water is too dear," Mr Grahame said.

Riverina rice growers were

likely to sell the little water they had rather than grow a crop.

Waterpool Co-op chief executive Peter Lawford said he would be "surprised" if temporary water prices reached \$500 but agreed prices "have a fair way to go yet".

"The market is very tight but one big rain event before the end of the year could change a lot of things," Mr Lawford said.

Irrigation allocations improved last week with Victoria's Murray allocations rising to 82 per cent. The Goulburn system rose to 72 per cent, the

Loddon system is 56 per cent, the Broken system increased to 8 per cent and the Campaspe system is 51 per cent.

General security water allocations in the NSW Murray rose to 12 per cent and the Murrumbidgee allocations improved to 29 per cent.

Murray Darling Basin inflows in the past year have been in the lowest 3 per cent on record, only seen in the Millennium drought of 2005-09.

Murray storages fell 107 gigalitres in the past week to 4220 gigalitres, or half full.

Macalister irrigators have

access to their full allocation while Werribee and Bacchus Marsh market gardeners are set to run out, with 15 per cent allocations and a race for recycled and emergency groundwater.

A spokeswoman for Water Minister Lisa Neville said there were no foreseen urban water restrictions.

The Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder still intends to trade 20,000 megalitres with irrigators in the Goulburn River Catchment.

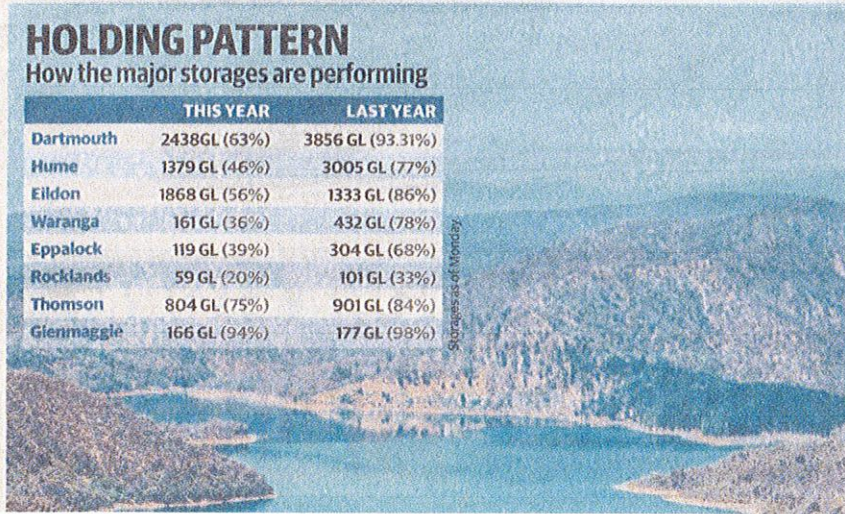
Thirty per cent of Victoria's water entitlements are designated for the environment.

## HOLDING PATTERN

How the major storages are performing

	THIS YEAR	LAST YEAR
Dartmouth	2438GL (63%)	3856 GL (93.31%)
Hume	1379 GL (46%)	3005 GL (77%)
Eildon	1868 GL (56%)	1333 GL (86%)
Waranga	161 GL (36%)	432 GL (78%)
Eppalock	119 GL (39%)	304 GL (68%)
Rocklands	59 GL (20%)	101 GL (33%)
Thomson	804 GL (75%)	901 GL (84%)
Glenmaggie	166 GL (94%)	177 GL (98%)

Storages of Monday



## State hangs on to its reserves

By NATALIE KOTSIOS

VICTORIA'S environmental water holder says it cannot spare any water to sell in the present weather conditions.

But Melbourne's water retailers say they will sell up to 40,000 megalitres of their critical water reserves.

The National Irrigators Council has called on the Victorian Government and Melbourne Water to release more water for trade as farmers battle the heat to plant summer crops.

NIC chief executive Tom Chesson believed upwards of 100,000 megalitres could be

they are to put a crop in the ground."

A spokeswoman for Water Minister Lisa Neville said the Victorian Environmental Water Holder independently decided if it had enough reserves to trade water.

"At the current time, the VEWH's environmental water demand-supply analyses have not identified that water could be made available for sale," the spokeswoman said.

"The VEWH is subject to the same allocations as irrigators and other entitlement holders and has adjusted its activities to deal with the dry conditions in parts of the state."

The national Irrigators Council has called on the Victoria Government and Melbourne Water to release more water for trade as farmers battle the heat to plant summer crops.

Governments have lost their way when it comes to water, they are just as bad as speculators who trade water for profit.

Dams storage were built to drought proof the communities and irrigators = October 2015



# Basin plan slammed by crossbenchers

POLITICAL pressure could lead to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan being scrapped or at least paused.

Seven of eight senate crossbenchers say the plan must be halted due to water prices spiraling out of control to a high of \$300 a megalitre in Victoria.

The senators have also called on Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull to give Agriculture Minister Barnaby Joyce full responsibility for the water portfolio.

Senator Bill Heffernan, a Junee farmer, has hit back saying the crossbenchers are playing with people's livelihoods.

"It's easy to go out ... to the southern NSW irrigation community of Griffith and say we're going to give you more water, or to go down the street and say we'll provide free beer, and you'll be popular.

"We do not go to Griffith or to Coleambally and say,



It's easy to go out ... to the southern NSW irrigation community of Griffith and say we're going to give you more water, or to go down the street and say we'll provide free beer, and you'll be popular

**Bill Heffernan**

"We're going to give you more water," he said. "I have places there and I know the people, but you cannot play politics with their livelihoods.

"You can argue for as long

as you like about the politics of it (but) put the politics to bed, for God's sake. But you've got to apply some science to it," he said. Meanwhile, National Irrigators' Council chief executive Tom Chesson has called on state governments to release water from alternative sources to help the Murray-Darling Basin.

Mr Chesson said Victorian, ACT and SA state governments could do much more to boost water available to plant summer crops and save jobs in the Murray Darling Basin.

"The Victorian government could immediately direct Melbourne Water to use allocations attached to the 75,000 megalitres of water entitlements it owns in the MDB to underwrite jobs in the Southern Basin," Mr Chesson said.

A senate select committee will meet in Griffith on October 27.

22<sup>nd</sup> Oct 2015 = Bill Heffernan price of water out of control \$300 ml in Victoria

Malcolm Turnbull Prime Minister



HEAVY falls of rain throughout southern NSW have been welcomed. But closed roads and waterlogged drive-ways have caused some logistical headaches for livestock producers. Numbers of cattle at the Wagga Livestock Marketing Centre on Monday dropped significantly due to the fact livestock carriers couldn't access some properties.



Details from the sheep and cattle sales Page 11

AS WET AS IT GETS: Livestock agent Peter Power of Rodwells, Wagga is clad in an oilskin coat and braves the wet conditions.

# DELUGE ARRIVES

Rural news 9th June 2016

BY NIKKI REYNOLDS

ROADS were cut, paddocks flooded and crops inundated with rain but farmers say the falls this week are welcome.

Livestock prices immediately kicked by 10c/kg on the back of market optimism, and also the fact that numbers fell due to the logistics of accessing some properties.

But for cropping farmers - especially those who had sown late - the rain has

provided some surety and confidence of a good season.

NSW Department of Primary Industries technical specialist, grain services, Peter Matthews said early weed control now topped the list for winter cropping operations.

He said many parts of the state were still too wet to access but indicated farmers would enter the paddocks in the next seven to 10 days to spray weeds.

"It has certainly helped to improve conditions after the warm, above average temperatures in May," he said.

"A lot of moisture was lost in that period and the good rainfall has put us back on track." He also said the falls would help to improve dam water levels for livestock and boost pasture and lucerne crops.

Riverina Livestock Agents (RLA) livestock agent and auctioneer James Tierney of

Wagga said the wet weather had injected optimism into the livestock industry and also tightened up supply.

"There were some people who couldn't move stock because it was too wet... and then there were others who chose to hold on to them (rather than sell) because the season is turning out well," he said. Mr Tierney tipped it would be a good week for livestock overall with plenty of interest in the Gundagai

Weaner Sale on Friday.

"I think Gundagai will be very strong," he said. Livestock agents were also expecting some good returns at the Thursday sheep sale which drew for more than 36,000.

In the past seven days West Wyalong received 73mm Griffith, 63mm, Grong Grong, 61mm, Lake Cargelligo, 60mm, Cootamundra, 33mm and Lockhart, 32mm.



Peter Matthews

In 2016 the dams were over flowing, and the floods were not counted as environment flow.

October the Murrumbidgee River flood water was on the side of the road at Darlington Point.



# 'Millions' in productivity traded away

BY STEPHEN MUDD

AN ESTIMATED \$98 million worth of productivity left the Murrumbidgee Valley in one day, according to Griffith mayor John Dal Broi.

The Department of Primary Industries Water (DPI Water) re-opened water trading between the Murrumbidgee and Murray valleys last Thursday, but had to close it again after 50,000 megalitres was traded in just 24 hours.

Griffith mayor John Dal Broi said it was outrageous.

"If you extrapolate the cost out, water is about \$280 per megalitre at the moment, it's about \$14 million dollars worth of water that left our valley," Councillor Dal Broi said.

"They say a dollar goes around the community about seven times, which

means \$98 million dollars is gone from the Murrumbidgee Valley.

"I want to know who benefited from the trade, you'll never know because all of those details are kept confidential, but I bet it wasn't farmers."

DPI Water deputy commissioner Bruce Cooper announced on Friday the trade closed after "unprecedented trading activity".

"Extremely heavy trade in the last 24 hours has seen the trade limit reached again forcing the trade closure," Mr Cooper said.

"Allocation trade into and within the valley remains unaffected. There clearly remains very strong demand for water in the Murray."

Murrumbidgee farmer Deb Buller believed very few irrigators were the sellers.

"We're still trying to access more water for our crops, not sell it," Ms Buller said.

When the Senate Select Committee on the Murray-Darling Basin Plan came to Griffith on October 27, several witnesses complained about the lack of transparency in the water trading system.

Senator John Williams asked who was buying the water and whether it drove the price up.

Helen Dalton, who spoke on behalf of NSW Farmers, said no-one knew.

"There's no national water register so we don't know who is buying," Ms Dalton said.

Trade out of the valley will re-open once the inter-valley trade account drops back below the upper limit of 100,000 megalitres.



50,000 ml were traded in one day, cost of water \$280 per mg, who benefited from trading water?

You will never know; all details are kept confidential, need a national register, who is buying water.



## NEWS

# 'Ridiculous' water rules questioned

BY STEPHEN MUDD

PEOPLE across the Riverina have been left scratching their heads about a massive dumping of water from Burrinjuck Dam that has labelled "ridiculous" and "a sign of bureaucracy gone crazy".

Rules about 'translucent flows' of water saw Water NSW raise the output of the dam from 400 megalitres (ML) per day to 5600ML per day on Monday and then to 13,000ML per day on Tuesday, leading to concerns about flooding and water allocations.

The releases followed a week of heavy rain caused by a storm system that soaked the area and left parts of coastal NSW, Victoria and Tasmania dealing with floods.

According to Member for Murray Adrian Piccoli, the rules were designed 12 years ago, before the Murray-Darling Basin Plan existed, meaning the environment got to "double dip" on water.

"These rules are ridiculous," he said.

"I'm really angry about this and it leaves irrigators in an unacceptable position."

The 2004 Water Sharing Plan, which was designed to 'mimic' the flow of water before the dam was built, meant water had to be tipped out of the dam under certain conditions.

"Daily inflow rates of approximately 60,000ML into Burrinjuck mean that under the water sharing plan releases increased to about 13,000ML per day for up to two days depending on inflows," Water NSW manager of water systems operations Dan Berry said.

"The plan requires releasing a portion of the inflows to Burrinjuck Dam downstream, to protect the environmental health of the river," Mr Berry said.

"The level of storage, the condition of the catchment and inflows into the storage, are all considered in determining the release on a daily basis during this period."

However, Mr Piccoli said releasing the water when there was already good flows

from rain was a waste.

"This is having zero environmental impact and a negative economic impact," he said.

"The translucent rules just doesn't make sense any more and they can't be kept in place given the basin plan."

Mr Piccoli met with water minister Niall Blair about the release on Thursday morning and said he agreed the rules were inconsistent and something needed to be done.

Burrinjuck Dam was 41.2 per cent full on Tuesday up from 33.4 per cent last Thursday, according to the Water NSW website, meaning it held about 423,536 megalitres of water.

Griffith mayor John Dal Broi said it was a clear sign of "bureaucracy gone crazy".

"They're releasing far too much and in a few weeks they'll announce allocations for irrigators," he said.

"At the end of the day the dams were built for irrigation management and if they're managed properly there'll be enough for everyone."

June 2016 = environmental water 5600 mg per day on Monday and then to 13,000 per day on Tuesday.



**TALKING WATER:** Deb Buller and Helen Dalton believe questions need to be asked whether carryover is an acceptable substitute for good starting allocations.

*Friday 8 Sept 2017*

# Farmers are just after fair go on water

## TALKING WATER

FARMERS are adaptive to seasonal and market variability.

Coping with changing prices and weather events is second nature but trying to manage increasingly complicated water policy is creating stress and frustration.

During winter, we nervously await the opening water allocations (Available Water Determination).

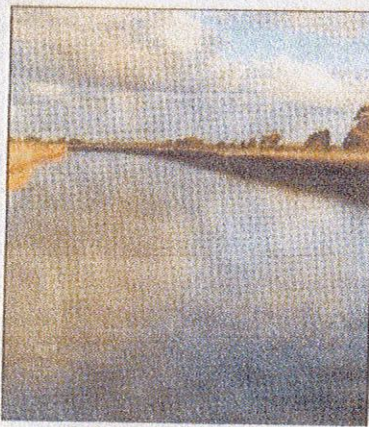
The decisions for ground preparation, ordering of chemical and fertilizer and extra efficiency measures have to be made well in advance of the optimum planting time.

To enhance low starting allocations, General Security irrigators are increasingly advised to go into the market and purchase carryover.

The belief carryover is an acceptable substitute for inadequate starting allocations is highly questionable.

Contrary to the original sound purposes behind carryover, water is now purchased in autumn, often at inflated prices, so that farmers can secure some consistency in production.

State government needs to recognise that irrigators have a water entitlement that they



Water allocations.

pay for every single year.

As responsible paying customers, they reasonably expect this to be allocated appropriately in an optimum timeframe.

The extra commitments via the Murray Darling Basin Plan, the ridiculously overly conservative approach to allocation announcements and the significant changes to carry over rules in 2008 have all created serious roadblocks and confusion for our farmers.

Low starting allocations then permeate through as local businesses and community services are negatively affected by reduced local spending and population numbers.

The lack of clarity in water

allocations needs to be addressed, particularly when the dam percentages are good.

The rules and regulations operating in the southern connected system are highly confusing as governments, state and federal, continue on their 'water reform' quest to deliberately impede general security allocations in order to 'cover off' on all other priorities and keep themselves 100 per cent risk free.

A full bank environmental flow down the Murrumbidgee was recently released from Burrinjuck Dam after five months of excessive flooding in 2016.

Nature, the State and Commonwealth Governments are all duplicating environmental flows to the point where the natural, Australian 'boom bust' ephemeral system is not operating.

The Aussie ideology of a fair go is severely wanting as communities endeavor to navigate through the complicated minefield of state and federal water policy.

However, just because it has all become so complicated isn't a good reason to not work towards sensibly rationalizing and streamlining water management.

Confusion for farmers = water a complex issue farmers need a fair go



NEWS

# Royal Commission calls growing louder

22/12/17

WATER

BY OLIVER JACQUES

THERE are growing calls in the MIA for a federal Royal Commission into the Murray Darling Basin Plan, after the eastern states accused South Australia of holding them hostage at a ministerial council meeting on water in Albury on Tuesday.

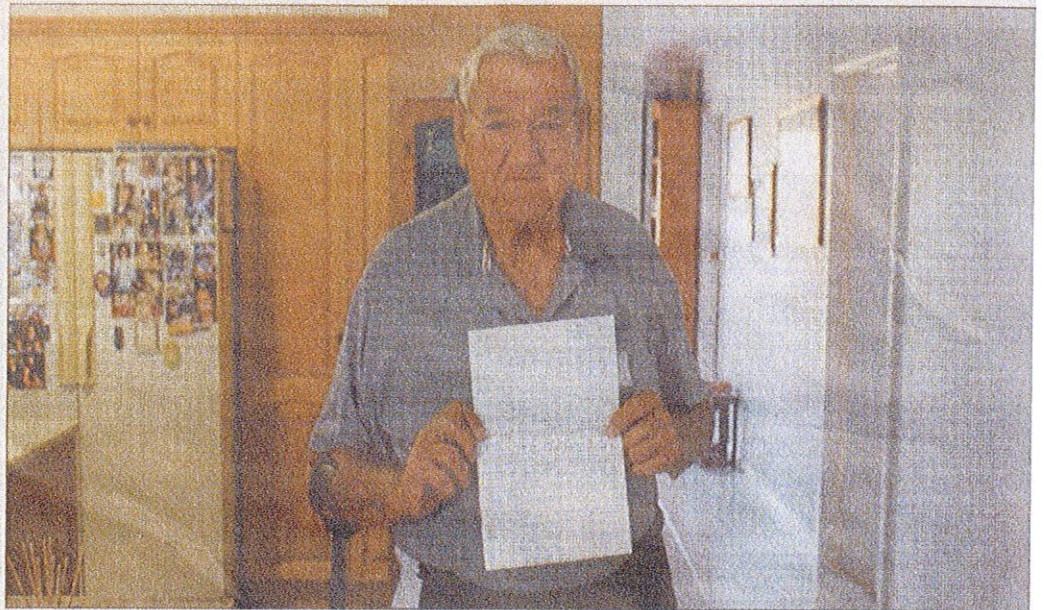
SA Water and River Murray Minister Ian Hunter says South Australia will not negotiate on the plan until there is a guarantee an extra 450 GL of water will be delivered upstream to his state.

In response, Victorian Water Minister Lisa Neville said, "South Australia pretty much tried to hold hostage, or blackmail the NSW and Victorian communities."

NSW Water Minister Niall Blair said communities would be "decimated" by the loss of 450 gigalitres, while MIA water advocates called for more action.

Helen Dalton, Shooters, Farmers and Fishers candidate at the recent Murray by-election, wants a federal Royal Commission.

"Out here we're all fed-up with water in the Murray-Darling being the political football of people



**KING SIZED BED:** Former Griffith mayor and long-time water campaigner Jim McGann said "irrespective of which government is in power, they're all in bed together".

in Canberra and several State Governments who are putting their own interests ahead of communities on the ground," Ms Dalton said.

"The success of other recent Royal Commissions shows how effective they are to allowing those affected by a key issue to actually have their say and not permit people in power to hide matters from public scrutiny.

Former Griffith mayor and long-time water campaigner

Jim McGann said Ms Dalton was "spot on".

"Irrespective of which government is in power, they're all in bed together".

"They are trying to price the irrigators out of business".

Ms Dalton said a royal commission must be federal.

"The South Australian Government has already called-for a State Royal Commission, but given that they are pursuing a request next week for an additional 450GL

from the Murray-Darling Basin, I fear that their proposal will be one-sided".

The federal government's commitment to the MBBP, however, was questioned by federal water minister Barnaby Joyce not showing up to the ministerial council meeting in Albury.

The exact reasoning behind the no-show is not clear with Mr Joyce's office not returning calls to the Fairfax Media.

Griffith Business Chamber president Paul Pier also backed calls for a federal royal commission, and the NSW Government should withdraw from the Basin Plan if the South Australian continue to refuse to cooperate.

The NSW Government has rejected calls for a royal commission, saying "would take years and would cost hundreds of millions of dollars".

they are all in bed together, they are trying to price irrigators out of business



Fran Pietroboni 26/3/18

Dear Editor

ABC 27 /7/2017 Water is the single most important natural resource for communities, who rely on the Darling River for their livelihood, and water rights have been traded up and down the river with operators with deep pocket to purchase water from small irrigators, and that is the problem big business holding communities downstream at ransom.

The Barwon Darling Rivers while watching ABC 4 corners on the state of the river, and what you see on the river is the first 2 pumps drawing water from the river into private holding dams, millions of litres of water to grow cotton, as one travels down the river there are 11 pumps, pumping water out of the river into private holding dams, and on one cotton farm they have 5 dam's and the farm dams are of enormous proportions, and it was reported that the meters were not metering the water, who has the responsibility for reading the meters?

It was also reported that two cotton company own 70% of water and one company own 30 billion litres of water, valued at \$300 million, and in good years they produce cotton, and when in drought they sell their water to desperate farmers, and make "more money than growing cotton."

How can a company own so much water out of the river and what about the environment and the people who rely on the river for domestic water and the stations that run their head of cattle and sheep.

Australians they needs a fair go when it comes to water, water is life birds, animals, plants, fish and people we all rely on mother nature, and it can be cruel when the river dries up, the animals die of thirst, " drought'.

Governments have failed the people and tax payers in regards to the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

In 2016 Griffith City Council made a submission to government in regards to water storage for NSW and recommended the Scheme for Diversion of the Clarence River Tributaries west to the Dumaresq River to the Murray – Darling Basin, the consulting Engineer in 1984 was David D Coffey ( BE FIEAust)

To divert river flows westward from high rainfall catchments in the Northern Rivers area of NSW and Queensland, and "governments fail to listen".

PS. The land 15<sup>th</sup> march 2018 Wilcannia, the Darling river is running dry, and the locals are planning to play cricket in the dry creek bed, when the flood water do come down to NSW, the flow is only expected to get as far as Bourke.

22<sup>nd</sup> Jan 2018

Fran Pietroboni

Editor

The irrigator  
103 Pine Ave  
Leeton 2705

Dear Editor

Menindee grape growers

How many people can remember going to the supermarket and buying Menindee market grapes many years ago and what happened to all the grape growers who produced the Menindee table grapes?

Water is the life line for any farming community, those farmers employed many people for pruning, picking and packing their market grapes, and transported to the market, to be sold to the supermarkets, and we the consumers enjoyed the grapes.

It was reported on the ABC Late line those grapes growers have lost out, what one saw were acres and acres of dead vines, what happens to the town and the people? They become unemployed.

The Darling River and the buyback of water by the Commonwealth Government in June 2017 from cotton growers of \$78 million for compensation, and water entitlements, and the grape growers were the losers again.

Governments buying water entitlements in the middle of a drought, if there is no water in the Darling River for the environment, they are buying what? (No water.)

The total area of the Murray Darling Basin covers 1,058,800 square kilometres, or 14% of the total area of Australia and contains over 40% of Australian farms and over two million people live in the basin.

Yours Sincerely

F.P.



**WATER WOES**

**DOWN THE BASIN PLUG HOLE**

**2008 - \$34 MILLION WASTED BUYING 250 GIGALITRES OF DARLING RIVER SUPPLEMENTARY WATER**

Murray Darling Basin State ministers and Federal Water Minister Penny Wong signed off on NSW Labor Water Minister Phil Costa's proposal to buy 250GL of Tandou Station's supplementary water to put towards the 500GL Living Murray project. Tandou had not received a drop of water against its 250GL since 2002-03 and based on the company's own financials valued the water at about \$3 million.

At the time of the sale Tandou Chairman Disk Warbuton said: "The company's remaining water entitlements are value at approximately \$30m, based on a recent independent valuation". Yet just eight months earlier Tandou's December 2007 annual report stated: "Independent valuations obtained by management estimate a recoverable amount of approximately \$33m based upon recent market selling prices of water shares".

**OUTCOME: \$34 million for \$3 million worth of water.**

**2009 - \$56 MILLION WASTED ON A NATIONAL WATER MARKET SYSTEM**

On November 9, 2009 Senator Wong announced: "Australia's water market will be significantly strengthened following a \$56 million investment by the Rudd Government to develop a faster, more efficient and nationally focused water market system".

"This initiative will develop a new National Water Market System that will deliver better, real time market information, much faster and more efficient transactions, and improved interstate trade," Senator Wong said.

**OUTCOME: The system was never developed. It morphed into an out-of-date dashboard on the Bureau of Meteorology's website.**



**2009 - \$303 MILLION FOR 240GL**

Senator Wong brokered the deal to buy Twynam's Gwydir, Barwon, Macquarie, Lachlan and Murrumbidgee supplementary and general security licenses.

At the time the 204GL of licenses had delivered 4.7GL in 2006-07, 19.5GL in 2007-08 and 13.9GL in 2008-09.

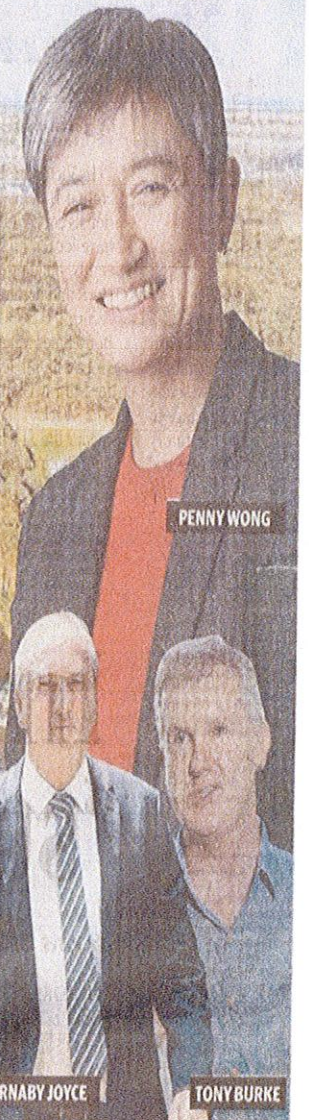
**OUTCOME: This season the deal delivered 3.3GL.**

**2017 - \$78 MILLION FOR 22GL OF LOWER DARLING WATER ENTITLEMENTS AT AN AVERAGE \$3561 A MEGALITRE**

Water Minister Barnaby Joyce signed off on the purchase of 22GL, 19GL of which was general security water that has not delivered a drop of water in three of the last four years.

The deal earned Tandou a one-off profit of \$36.1 million, but cut parent company Webster's cropping area from 17,000ha to 10,000ha as a result of decommissioning its Lake Tandou irrigation system after the 2018 growing season.

At the time Webster chief financial officer Maurice Felizzi said the premium was to offset the full decommissioning of the irrigatable land on the company's Lake Tandou property.



PENNY WONG

BARNABY JOYCE

TONY BURKE

**Dodgy deals waste millions**

Weekly Times 27 Nov 2019

How does one buy water, supplementary water, or entitlements, when there is no water, the country is in drought,



## SPECULATOR'S POWER

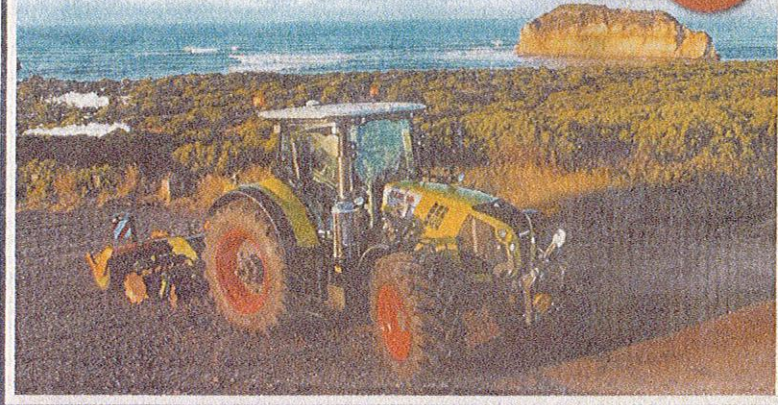
# Trader's grip on 14pc of water

## NAVIGATING THE NEXT-LEVEL 600

CLAAS has given its Arion 600 Series a makeover that's seen it pack on a few pounds, add a few more horses under the bonnet and fill the cabin with some tech wizardry.

Its belated arrival in Australia was met with such fanfare that models had been sold before its official launch at the Sungold Field Days near Warrnambool in February.

Crop Gear was given the opportunity to test the 600s in the paddock and on roads along the Great Ocean Road. To find out more about the Arions check out the latest issue of Crop Gear magazine, free in The Weekly Times next week.



By PETER HUNT

ONE of Australia's largest water speculators has gained massive market power, taking control of 161,000 megalitres of allocation water in the southern Murray Darling Basin in 2018.

Duxton Water spent \$31.76 million last year buying an estimated 100,000ML, plus gaining another 61,000ML against its entitlement holdings.

The allocation holding represents almost 14 per cent of the total volume of the annual allocation trade in the southern basin (excluding zero-value trades).

Most irrigators had assumed Duxton's allocation holdings were much lower, based on the quarterly cashflow declarations it lodged with the Australian Stock Exchange over 2018, which stated it had spent just \$17.29m on buying allocation water. However in its final annual report, released on February 22 this year, Duxton revealed it had spent \$31.76 million buying allocation water.

Duxton Water Assets director Alister Walsh has refused to answer questions on why there was such a large discrepancy in its reporting.

But the lack of transparency in Duxton trading and ongoing concerns over it and other speculators' influence on water markets, has led federal Water

Minister David Littleproud to promise a re-elected Coalition Government would call in the competition watchdog to investigate the basin's water markets.

Mr Littleproud said the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission would be called on to "get under the bonnet and have a good look at how and if the market is working".

When questioned on his support for an ACCC review, Labor water spokesman Tony Burke said: "Labor is happy to consider any measures to improve integrity in the Murray Darling water market."

The Weekly Times is aware irrigator complaints have already been lodged with the ACCC over concerns that some water investors:

**PLACED** substantial allocation buy-orders to prop up the market when resource managers announce increased allocations or if rain is set to ease demand.

**PLACED** a buy order to set a floor price and then sell water through the same broker to dispose of water at a marginally higher price.

**BID** to keep the price within a narrow predetermined price band, confident it had sufficient ability to influence the market to achieve that objective; and

**INFLATED** the market price by buying a number of small parcels of water, when there was no great depth to the market.

*Water = speculators has gained massive market power, taking control 161,000 megalitres of allocation water in the Southern Basin 2018*

*There no transparency of water ownership across the Basin.*

*Australian people have the right to know who own and controls water.*

*What has gone wrong that NSW irrigators for 2018-19 allocation is 6%*

*South Australia has 100% and Victoria 52% allocation*



# The real costs of water

What are we actually trading?

**J**ERILDERIE irrigator, Mick Moloney, runs a 4800 hectare operation, half of which is irrigated. He is in the Murray Irrigation area and grows mostly winter crops and some maize.



Jerilderie irrigator Michael Moloney carried over water last year and bought some to finish his winter crops, but says he has no fall-back this year. Photo: OLIVIA CALVER

"We're definitely on our knees, it's very hard to have any confidence in irrigation, we've gone from being irrigators to opportunist irrigators.

The general feeling among irrigators is that we're angry and bitter and it seems like the whole system is simply being drained down to South Australia.

There's just a general lack of confidence, it's (the Basin Plan) taken security away from our business, you know we can't rely on irrigation anymore, you can't plan. This year we only put in

unbelievable.

What needs to happen is independent, apolitical research into the Murray Darling Basin Plan by someone that's had nothing to do with it before, a fresh water ecologist from overseas or someone like that, because the whole thing is so political

couldn't see a future in it.

What really struck us is one day we went to a meeting in Griffith that was an explanation from State Water on how they derive our water allocations. We were really interested because we were wondering

(To improve efficiency)

we put in the raised beds and did a whole farm plan to become more water efficient, but it seemed like the more efficient we became the less and less water we had to work with.

It cost us a heap of money

**Robert Hoddle, Gun-nible Pastoral Company, Gunnedah, runs 30,000 mixed citrus trees.**

"I think we have got a terrible shortage of water and unless we get good general rain the prospects for next summer are dire.

competing with the mining industry at auction.

My big thing is we have to become more efficient in the way we apply the water. I believe we could probably use half the water we are using, as they have in other countries like Israel.

In our valley we have competition between agriculture, mining and urban, and urban is growing considerably because a number of these quarter acre blocks are all wanting water and we just extended the pipeline from Gunnedah to Cutlewis and are pumping out of the same aquifer, which is over pumped anyway.

The only solution is water efficiency to me and that is just so important in our situation. We use drip technology so we really are absolutely as efficient as we can possibly be and it's a really good system.

We moved from irrigating pasture and lucerne for cattle into an intensive citrus orchard. We went to something that had a higher return per megalitre.

It seems like the citrus, nuts and horticulture are

any more, you can't plan.

This year we only put in a third of our usual corn area and the whole thing was a low margin, high risk exercise that we wouldn't care to repeat.

We carried over (water) last year and bought some to finish off winter crops, but we've got no fall-back this year.

(Before the water reform) we had vibrant communities, exciting businesses, we were able to forward plan and invest.

The biggest change I've seen in my whole career has been the Basin Plan, it's decimated irrigation. With the river in minor flood for most of the summer and zero allocation, it's been just

someone like that, because the whole thing is so politically tainted now.

The lower lakes and the Coorong need to be included in the Basin Plan, because they're not at the moment. I would also like to know which politicians own (or have owned) water and when they sold and bought it in every state, and their families."

**Third-generation Yanco irrigator, Bernie Walsh, sold his property to walnut growers last year due to the price of water and low allocation.**

"(The irrigation industry is) absolutely flawed, honestly it's a mess and that's the main reason we got out was because we

because we were wondering why on earth are we getting such low allocations.

The explanation was so complicated that (my wife) Elizabeth and I walked away from that meeting understanding little and thinking it was all ridiculous.

We had to make our decisions on their decisions... so we were making decisions based on something we didn't understand.

It just got to the stage that the water price was always a lot more than what we could make from anything we were growing.

It was becoming impossible for us, we had some debt and we just thought this is getting way too hard to keep going.

It cost us a heap of money to become more efficient, so we had to have the water to grow the crops to make the money to pay back the loan. It was a vicious cycle.

You can only become efficient to a point, and now we might have a really good layout, but there's no water left to use it.

All I can see is the price of water going up and up and it's just not economic to grow crops.

I'm still at a loss with their reasoning of letting the water run down the river and flushing it out to sea. I would like to see that scrutinised.

I'm worried they're not enhancing the environment, they actually could be damaging it."

summer are dire.

We have permanent plantings. We grow 50ha of oranges and we rely on the underground water and we are finding that during the peak in January and February when there is a lot demand on the aquifer what we can pump is restricted.

We have had to put down a new bore and put in a very expensive pipeline to automate our system to enable us to continue to produce a permanent crop.

We had 70pc of our water allocation taken away and then we had to buy water back again and now in our situation if we are buying more water back again, which we will probably have to try and do, we are

nuts and horticulture are probably offering better returns than cotton and cereal. The drip system is fantastic. We have had it for 12 years and the efficiency is huge, we get minimal evaporation.

I think we have got to be realistic. If you put water in above ground storage you will lose over half of it in a season through evaporation and that is huge, so if we could do away with that we have saved half the water.

Governments have probably got to focus on helping people transition to better, more efficient watering systems. Everyone is worried about the water. There is not a lot of it."

- OLIVIA CALVER and LUCY KINBACHER

## the real cost of water

the explanation was so complicated that the farmer and his wife, walked away from the meeting understanding and thinking it was ridiculous, they made a decisions on something that they didn't understand, the water price was always a lot more than what they could make from anything that they were growing

I attended the meeting a lot of talk and all the government people who spoke did not know what they were taking about, they were all paid a salary





# Pre-requisite Policy Measures Fact sheet

## Pre-requisite Policy Measures in the Murrumbidgee

7 June 2014 7 people  
18.6.14

Enabling provisions have been included in the *Water Sharing Plan for the Murrumbidgee Regulated River Water Source 2016* to allow pre-requisite policy measures (PPMs) to take effect.

### What are Pre-requisite Policy Measures?

Water Act

PPMs aim to maximise the beneficial outcomes of water recovered for the environment under the Basin Plan. They need rule changes to improve the use and accounting of water for the environment in the southern-connected Murray-Darling Basin.

Held environmental water represents a group of licences that are committed to the environment at any one time. PPMs are two new ways to manage held environmental water:

- To account for and protect 'return flows' of water for the environment. Some of the water used in an environmental event may return to the river as a 'return flow'. These return flows are recognised and can be used for environmental purposes downstream (environmental flow reuse).
- To provide for piggybacking. Water for the environment can be released on top of unregulated flows. Environmental water holders will be able to order water from storage during regulated or unregulated flow events.

The measures are different from traditional management of consumptive water and river operations, as water released for irrigation is typically consumed with minimal return flow, and is met from the most efficient source available, including tributary inflows.

Rules for access to supplementary flow events will not change. Only environmental water ordered on top of supplementary flows will be protected from extraction or re-regulation.

2750 mg

### Why are PPMs being introduced?

3 accounts

Basin State Governments agreed to implement PPMs under the *Intergovernmental Agreement on Implementing Water Reform in the Murray Darling Basin 2013*. Implementing PPMs is critical to achieving the environmental outcomes of the Basin Plan with the 2,750 GL/yr of water identified for recovery.

PPMs maximise the benefits of supply projects under the Basin Plan sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism. Without PPMs in place, more water would need to be recovered for the environment to meet Basin Plan obligations.

In NSW, PPMs will be applied in the NSW Murray and Lower Darling and Murrumbidgee regulated rivers.

Under the Basin Plan, PPMs must be in effect by 30 June 2019. Measures in place must demonstrate that water for the environment can use piggybacking and environmental flow reuse for the efficient and effective use of held environmental water.

### How will PPMs be implemented?

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) developed PPM Assessment Guidelines. These guidelines require arrangements for PPMs that are secure and enduring, fully operable, transparent and identify and mitigate risks.

31.5.14  
G.A. East

Another meeting seven government people in attendance, again they do not know what is going on, trying to explain, as one farmer said I sold my farm to my son, less water to farm.



## Sustainable diversion limit compliance for surface water

The *Basin Plan 2012* was developed by the Commonwealth Government to provide the framework for water take within the Murray–Darling Basin. This includes establishing sustainable diversion limits (SDL), which are the amount of groundwater and surface water that can be taken from a water resource unit within the Murray–Darling Basin. The SDLs ensure there is enough water remaining in the environment to keep the river system and groundwater resources healthy.

### Surface water sustainable diversion limits

Surface water SDLs are specified as a long-term average annual water use at a water management unit (SDL resource unit) level and on a Basin-wide scale.

The first step in establishing the SDLs was to determine how much water was being used by industries and communities annually within a water resource unit. This is known as the baseline diversion limit (BDL) and it is an estimate of how much water (on average) was used in the water resource unit area prior to the development of the Basin Plan.

The SDL for a resource unit is BDL minus recovery for the environmental water. The recovery for the environmental water has been set at 2,750 gigalitres for the entire basin, and the recovery target for each water resource unit, along with the BDL, is specified in the Schedule 2 of the *Basin Plan 2012*.

### Sustainable diversion limits compliance framework

The Murray–Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) has the responsibility to monitor Basin-state compliance with the SDL, with enforcement of SDLs commencing from 1 July 2019. The MDBA must establish, maintain and publish a register of the amount of water taken each year in each SDL resource unit across the Basin.

Reporting and assessment of compliance with SDL will be undertaken after the end of every water year by way of mandatory reporting under Section 71 of the *Water Act 2007*. It also expands on the existing cap framework to report all forms of water take, including take from watercourses, regulated rivers, groundwater, run-off dams, floodplain harvesting, commercial plantations (net take) and basic rights.

SDL reporting and compliance is at the SDL-resource-unit scale and is not intended to identify the illegal theft of water by individuals, or whether water has been taken in contravention of individual access licence conditions.

### The register of take

Complying with SDLs is done using the process outlined in Division 3 of Part 4 of Chapter 6 of the *Basin Plan 2012*. This involves calculating the maximum volume of water **permitted to be taken** and the volume **actually taken** each year. The difference between these two volumes is then recorded on a register of take as a credit or a debit depending on whether actual take is less than or greater than the permitted take.

A cumulative balance is established that varies according to each year's credit or debit. A SDL resource unit is considered to have exceeded compliance when the cumulative balance is in debit by an amount that is equal to or more than 20% of the SDL for that SDL resource unit.

### Reasonable excuse

Under the Basin Plan, a Basin state may claim a reasonable excuse when the compliance test is exceeded. As the regulator, the MDBA will determine whether or not a reasonable excuse should be accepted. This determination is based on the evidence provided by the Basin state, any supplementary evidence acquired by the MDBA and the justification for the reasons set out for that circumstance.

LIQUID GOLD

# Water trades reap millions

By PETER HUNT

THE Murray Darling Basin's biggest speculator Duxton Water has dived into this season's market, trading and transferring 32,830 megalitres on to and off its NSW Murray Water licences in just two months as prices hit \$800/ML.

The 32,830 megalitres represents 19.1 per cent of all the 171,836 megalitres traded on and off NSW Murray water access licences in the 2019-20 season, up until last Friday.

Exactly how much can be made out of the water market is reflected in just one of Duxton's recent trades, in which the South Australian speculator paid \$315 million for 5000 megalitres of Murrumbidgee allocation at \$630 a megalitre, which it then transferred to its NSW Murray licence on August 6.

Trade out of the Murrumbidgee then closed on August 16, leading to a scramble for water on the Murray that pushed the price to \$800 a megalitre, lifting the value of Duxton's 5000-megalitre parcel to \$4 million.

The company's 2018 financial report showed it delivered total returns to its shareholders of 40 per cent last year and has since poured profits into lifting its portfolio of per-

MARKET PLAYERS			2019-20 TOTAL TRADE = 171,837ML YTD		
NSW Murray allocation water trade in megalitres			WATER ACCESS LICENCES OWNED BY		
2018-19 TOTAL TRADE = 557,069ML			TRADED ONTO	TRADED OFF	
<b>DUXTON</b>					
WAL 39825	41,745ML	19,130ML			
WAL 41663 & 41664	14,259ML	6430ML			
WAL 41750 & 41828	6806ML	4175ML			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>62,810ML</b>	<b>29,675ML</b>			
<b>16.6% of trade</b>	<b>92,485ML</b>				
<b>RURALCO</b>					
WAL 5744	5350ML	5350ML			
<b>SKYE BELLAMY</b>					
SKYE BELLAMY WAL 37142	778ML	65ML			
			<b>19.1% of trade</b>	<b>32,831ML</b>	
			<b>16% of trade</b>	<b>27,495ML</b>	
			<b>10.7% of trade</b>	<b>18,447ML</b>	

manent water entitlements, which grew from \$173 million last December to \$248 million by June 30.

One of Victoria's largest family-owned vegetable producers, who did not wish to be named, said: "These people are making a quick quid out of farmers' misery."

Boundary Bend executive chairman Rob McGavin said the heart of the problem lay in rules allowing pure financial

investors to hoard water while pretending to offer financial solutions to irrigators. The olive grower said governments should ban non-irrigators purchasing and carrying over allocation water.

Mr McGavin also called on the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to urgently investigate water-trading exchanges.

Duxton Water assets manager Alister Walsh said the

trade represented both commercial and non-commercial transfers from licence to licence.

"As of the end of July over 54 per cent of the entitlements held by the company are directly allocated through leases to primary producers," Mr Walsh said. "The balance held entitlements is used to provide water supply through Forward and Spot allocation again through to irrigators."

Meanwhile water brokers Ruralco and Wilks Water have been trading massive volumes on to their own NSW Murray Water Licences.

RuralCo traded 24,769 megalitres on to its NSW Murray water access licence in the past two months.

Wagga Wagga broker Tom Wilks has also traded 15,868 megalitres of water on to his wife Skye Bellamy's account, which he said was a contrac-

tual arrangement to help clients. NSW Water register records show 10,385 megalitres of this water was traded onto Ms Bellamy's account in just three days leading up to the Murrumbidgee IVT closure.

Mr Wilks said the transfers allowed buyers "who's WALs aren't attached to works", to transfer water onto Ms Bellamy's licence, thus avoiding a \$4.50 a megalitre variable-use charge.

Trading out of the Murrumbidgee then closed on August 16<sup>th</sup>, leading to a scramble for water on the MURRAY that pushed the price of water \$800 a megalitre, lifting the value of Duxton's 5000 megalitre parcel to \$4million.

Water trading, those who have water to trade a making a profit at the expense of farmers in times of drought.

We are a land of drought, bushfires, and flooding rains. Rain should not be traded as shares. Dams were built to drought proof our land, to produce food.



28/2/19

Fran Pietroboni



Editor

The Area News

Banna Ave

Griffith 2680

Dear Editor

IN response to my letter to the Hon. Prime Minister Scott Morrison MP  
23/10/18.

I received a letter from the Hon. David Littleproud MP, as quote.

In respect your concern about Adani, Water allocation for agriculture and mining is the responsibility of the relevant state water authorities, and not the Commonwealth Government.

The Queensland Government granted Adani a groundwater and surface licence for the safe operation of the proposed mine. The volume of water available to Adani is limited to the purpose of operating the mine safely.

Not one word about my concern of the low water allocation of 7% for Murrumbidgee irrigation, and the Murray 0%, and the Murray Darling Basin Plan in 2007 to take 42% of water from irrigation farmers for the environment, in the middle of a drought that lasted 9 years, and the Commonwealth buy back of water for the environment, too many hands in the muddy water, and Australia is one of the only countries in the world that sell water entitlements to overseas investors who produce food for their own country. En quote.

**State Labour Government! The Water Acts of 1905 state ownership of all water resource;**

**Administration of the Burrinjuck dam system by three commissioners, to be independent of politics and parliament, and waters of the western rivers are a great public resource which must be placed under public control to protect the public welfare.**

Today we have the Commonwealth Environmental Water who is responsible for the environment water that flows to South Australia, which comes from Southern NSW and Victoria irrigation communities.

**Under the current rules the MDBA independently manages all the Murray River's storages, weirs, and is responsible for the release of water from the Dartmouth Dam, that flows up to the South Australia border. At that point all river operation is control by the S.A Government.**

**While our farmers are facing water shortages and high water prices, S.A irrigators are receiving 100% water allocation in times of drought, and to top it off the S.A government selling excess water to NSW and Victorian farming communities, price \$500/ML, Rice Mill loss of 80 jobs, and dairy farmers walking off, and S.A long week end in January fresh water classic yachting regatta held on Lake Alexandrina.**

Water has become so complicated, the Commonwealth Government that environmental water available to retain the Lower Lake level at the expense of the barrage flows, compromises the connection of the river to the sea, and may put at risk, "Under the Ramsar Convention" the Australian Government obligation, the international agreement to protect the Coorong. It has been reported that more than 600 GL of additional environmental water has reached the lower lake every year since 2014-15 to maintain the lakes levels.

It time to open up the barrages and let the sea in, as our first explorers found it, and let our farming communities keep on farming at what they do best, feed the Nation.

Yours Sincerely

*J.P.*



WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 13, 2019

GRIFFITH'S OWN NEWSPAPER SINCE 1923

# The Area News

## TRADED OFF

### Market concerns aired at water forum

BY JACINTA DICKINS

"TO try and take the emotion out of this debate, change the word 'water' to 'oxygen'."

This irrigator's sentiment seemed to have been the general consensus at the ACCC's water forum, for despite Griffith's renown for fiery exchanges on water, those in attendance put aside their anger to start working on the way forward.

The three hour consultation on Monday at the Griffith Exies Club saw many take the chance to answer questions by ACCC Deputy Chairman Mick Keogh to highlight their experiences of water markets. There was an 'unanticipated' number of people who came, over 100 from right across the MIA.

Speaking to Mr Keogh after the forum, he said different areas within the Murray Darling Basin had differing emphasis on problems and yet over it all was concern over water availability.

"I think obviously there is a general concern about the prices of water and the demand in the market for water. You could say that's similar across all the places, particularly with allocation trades the way they are at the moment." Mr Keogh said.

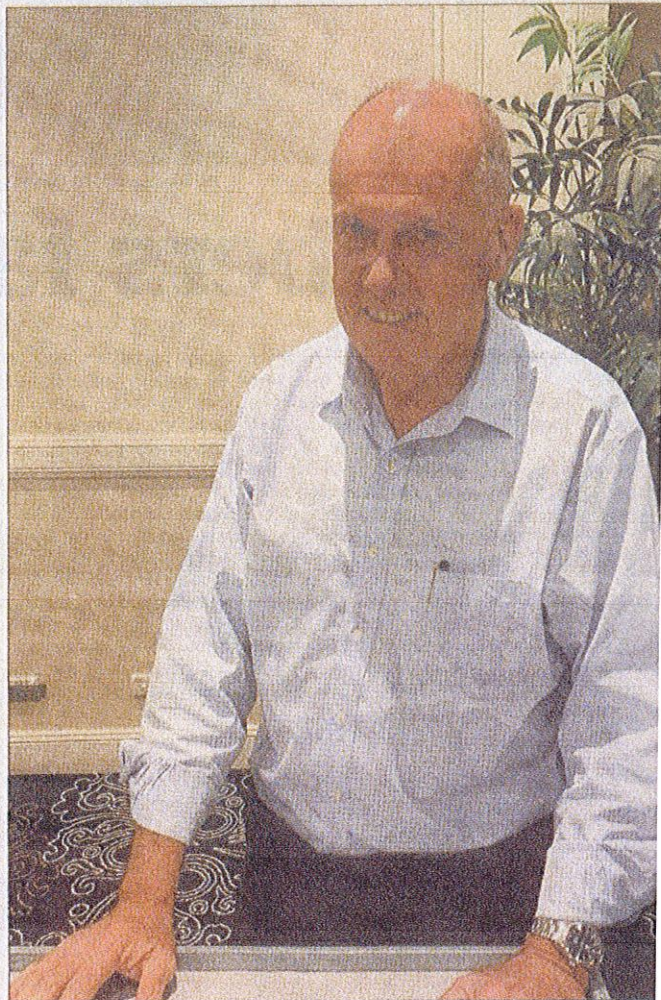
The forum saw speculation on speculators, differing views on the carry-over system, the difficulty of finding information and prices online, the lack of transparency in water licences, unintended consequences of conveyance, a market with flaws enabling water brokers to manipulate prices for a higher commission, as well as an 'outdated' paper system that hadn't kept up with modern times.

While nothing he heard surprised him, Mr Keogh said what strikes home is the complexity in the different facets of the water market.

"We talk about the water market but there is a huge variety of sub-markets that make up the big picture. The rules, the complexity is quite amazing and is a real challenge for everyone to understand."

While he stopped at foreshadowing what ACCC conclusions would be, he said they would note increased transparency and real-time information on the water market was commented on at all three forums to date.

"In any of our inquiries we understand that people have views of the situation from their perspective," Mr Keogh said.



DISCUSSIONS: ACCC deputy chairman Mick Keogh chaired the Griffith forum on Monday at the Exies Club, facing an "unprecedented" crowd of over 100 from the

### Submission

2-11-19. Murray Darling Basin Plan inquire waterinquire @acc.gov.au

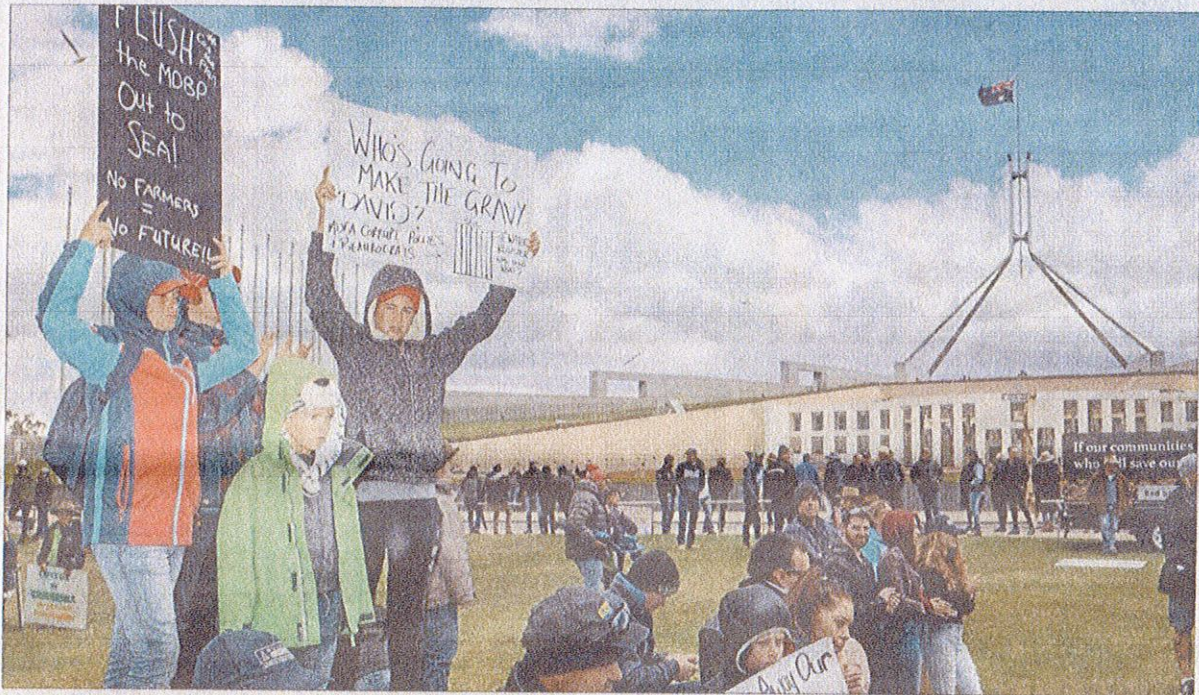
Trading rain like shares Who owns the rain –

MIA irrigators have 6% water allocation 2019-20, Murray has 0%



GRIFFITH'S OWN NEWSPAPER SINCE 1923

# The Area News



CONVOY: Reuben, 11, and Jude, 7, Haley, and their cousin Jack Villa, 12, from Griffith protest at Parliament House. PHOTO: Sithixay Dithavong

## CONVOY WIN

OLIVIER CALVER

MIA farmers joined thousands packing the Canberra streets in trucks, vans and cars to protest the Murray Darling Basin Plan. With the goal to make politicians listen, it seems their protests have given them a "win".

While their end-game may have varied from "canning the plan" to fixing problems

the show of solidarity seems to have hit home.

Not coming away empty handed, a meeting on Monday at Parliament House has resulted in ministers seeking an agreement from Ministerial Council on December 17.

Griffith rally coordinator Leo Ieraci was incredibly proud to be a part of a movement sparking potential change, yet said it was too

"We won't know how successful we have been until they drop the doors down, and we see the rivers at the level they should be for the drought," he said.

"That'll be the indication if we have gotten the message across. And if we haven't, we will have to think of another way."

Over 50 people from Griffith went along to the rally,

with an additional 27 passengers on the bus.

"A lot of people couldn't make it, and I received a heap of phone calls from people before to see how things are going - there was a great deal of interest."

"There should have easily been around 1000 people from the Riverina area alone."

He thanked the SpeakUp

water campaign for organising the rally, Leeton coordinator Robert Quodling, as well as all the supporters from Griffith.

Rally organisers including Southern Riverina Irrigators leaders Chris Brooks and Darcy Hare met with Minister of Water Resources David Littleproud, touting the resulting plan as a "win for protesters".

Continued Page 3.

Continued from Front.

The agreement would see the Interim Inspector General Murray Darling Basin Water Resources (IIG) Mick Keelty immediately investigate the impact of the changing distribution of inflows to the Southern Basin on state shares under the Murray Darling Basin Agreement.

It will also consider any consequential impacts on state share resulting from reserves required under the agreement, including how these interact with state allocation policies.

Mr Brooks said although the Minister's commitment was a win, it would only make an impact if the state and

federal government's agreed to give power to the IIG.

"For the first time that I've been involved in this water debate it's been really positive," Mr Brooks said.

"The message I would say for these people to take home is you're going to have a future... they've given me the confidence that they accept

what we're saying is right.

"I look forward to working with Mick Keelty to identify the issues, that he can report back to Minister Littleproud by the end of March 2020, and that's a short period for us to tolerate by comparison to the belting we've had since 2012." The IIG will report back by March 31, 2020.

A spokesman from Farrer MP and Environment Minister Sussan Ley's office said she had pulled the strings making the meeting between the organisers and Mr Littleproud a reality.

"Sussan was able to arrange an hour-long meeting for rally organisers with the Minister for Water Resources



18th Dec 2019

# Water speculators exposed

By PETER HUNT

SPECULATORS' water trades will be exposed to full public scrutiny, under sweeping reforms to be introduced by Victorian Water Minister Lisa Neville.

In delivering the Government's response to the recent inquiry into water market transparency, Ms Neville said changes would be made to track and publish anyone making more than 20 allocation trades a year — predominantly speculators.

The names of companies and individuals who own more than 2 per cent of the water on any irrigation system would also be made public.

"Victorian irrigators have made it clear they have concerns about speculators distorting the water market and that greater transparency is needed," Ms Neville said.

Victorian Farmers Federation water council chairman Richard Anderson said irrigators welcomed the reforms, given ongoing concern over speculators flooding into water markets.

## Basin target has 'high chance to fail'

By PETER HUNT

THE "relaxed constraints" model that underpins the federal push to lift the Murray Darling Basin Plan recovery target by 450 gigalitres to 3200GL is flawed, according to a key report by NSW and Victorian government-appointed industry experts.

The 3200GL target was enshrined in the basin plan by the former Labor Gillard Government in a bid to flood 75 per cent of the Basin's wetlands and floodplains, as well as push a peak flow of 80GL a day across the South Australia-

lian border. But state and federal water ministers meeting in Brisbane yesterday were told the recovery push for the 450GL had a "high chance of failure", given impacts of higher flows on land, businesses and local infrastructure. The model assumes state governments can remove flow constraints — lifting dam outlet capacities, raising bridges, levies and roads, as well as getting owner approval to flood at least 3000 farms and other properties.

Three of Australia's leading water industry experts

concluded "river operators will not be creating 'managed' 80GL/8 flows at the South Australian border" and the Commonwealth was already struggling with constraints on delivering environmental water allocated against the 2080GL of cap-equivalent entitlements it owns.

NSW Water Minister Melinda Pavey said the report showed need for a rethink on how the Basin plan works, or it would fail. "We need artificial timeframes to be removed and projects that deliver real world outcomes for our communities."

Victorian Water Minister Lisa Neville noted that recovering an additional 450GL was all about "creating a man-made flood to achieve environmental benefits".

"Yet we've found that under the current modelling, neither the community or the environment will get a good outcome," she said. "We need to go back and make sure the modelling is real life and can accurately explain the impact this will have on properties and homes — and demonstrate what environmental outcomes will actually be achieved."

"What the minister has done is in line with the VFF's call," he said. "My only disappointment is that she hasn't attached allocation accounts to water-use licences."

Under the VFF's proposal non-water users would be unable to trade, as they would

have to own a water licence that matched the volume of their trade.

The VFF also wants to see water brokers banned from trading water off their own or related-parties' accounts, a practice that makes it impossible to track trades.

Under the reforms, the minister has directed the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning to:

**PUBLISH** the names of companies that own 2 per cent or more of water in a system on the Victorian Water Register, to address monopoly behav-

our. The Government will also pursue legal changes to report the same information for individuals with greater than 2 per cent;

**REPORT** on non-water users in the market by tracking how they use their accounts and pursue legal changes to allow

### HAVE YOUR SAY

Should large water trades be exposed?

[theweeklytimes.com.au](http://theweeklytimes.com.au)

publication of information about allocation accounts with more than 20 trades per year: **INTRODUCE** new requirements to provide more clarity on different types of trade, so it's clear what kind of purchase or transfer has occurred and at what price; and **LIST** the names of water brokers who meet government standards and auditing requirements associated with the use of Victoria's water broker portal on the Victorian Water Register website.

Ms Neville said she would encourage her interstate counterparts to follow suit at the Ministerial Council next week.

Ms Neville has also called on the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to look at overseas ownership, monopoly ownership and unhelpful speculation, along with registration of brokers across state borders.

Victoria irrigators have made it clear they have concern about speculators distorting the water market and that greater transparency is needed Making money out of irrigators misery.



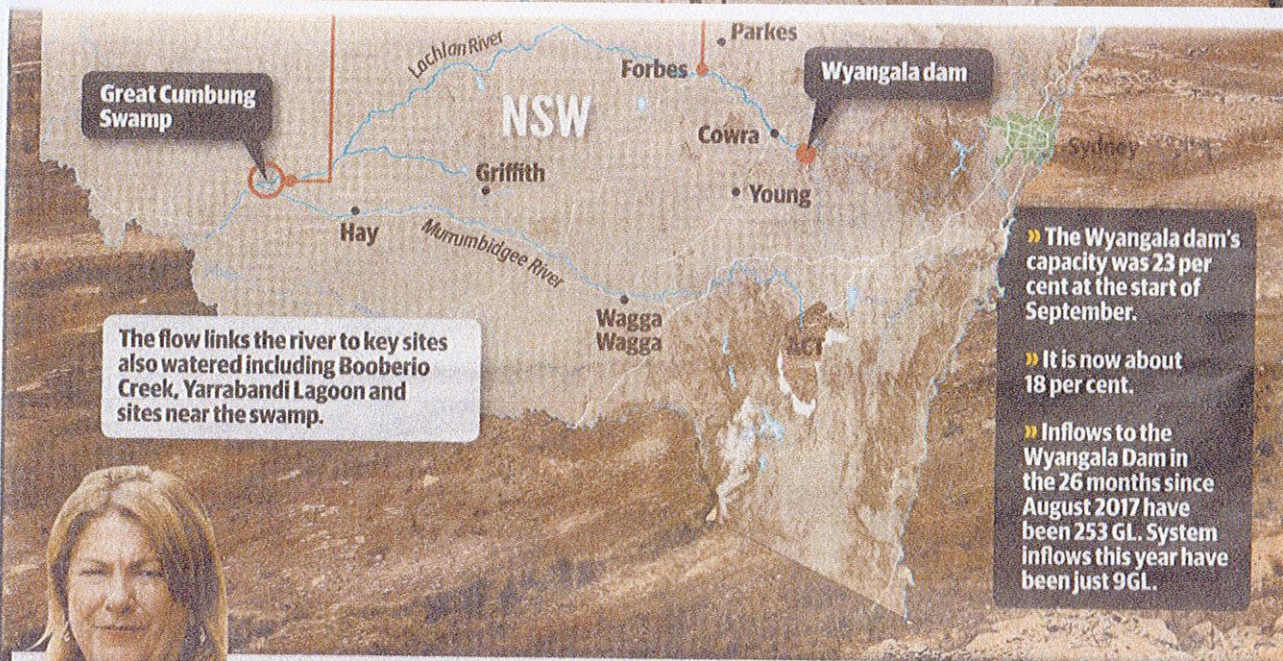
# IT'S GOD-DAM

## 22B LITRES OF WATER SENT TO SWAMP

### FLUSHED AWAY

22GL of water flows 1000 km from the Wyangala dam to the Great Cumbung Swamp.

Starting at Wyangala Dam in mid September, the flow peaked at around 2600 megalitres per day for five days at Forbes.



The flow links the river to key sites also watered including Booberio Creek, Yarrabandi Lagoon and sites near the swamp.

» The Wyangala dam's capacity was 23 per cent at the start of September.

» It is now about 18 per cent.

» Inflows to the Wyangala Dam in the 26 months since August 2017 have been 253 GL. System inflows this year have been just 9GL.



**EXCLUSIVE**  
**ANNA CALDWELL**  
STATE POLITICAL EDITOR

THOUSANDS of residents of drought-stricken NSW towns and struggling farmers watched in horror as federal bureaucrats flushed 22 billion litres of water down a dwindling river system to land in swamplands.

The critical Wyangala Dam's already low storage level has plunged by 20 per cent just weeks after the water release.

NSW Water Minister Melinda Pavey (left) said

last night the water released from the dam down the Lachlan River on orders from the independent Commonwealth Environment Water Holder was enough to supply the population of the towns of Cowra, Condobolin, Lake Cargelligo and Forbes for over a year.

The CEWH — an independent Commonwealth agency charged with irrigating river streams — told the state body Water NSW to release the 22 gigalitres from mid-September to help the parched river system.

Water NSW complied and the water was sent on its 1000km journey down the

Lachlan River where it will sink into the Great Cumbung Swamp in the state's south-west. That supply could have sustained the population of those drought ravaged towns — somewhere between 20,000 and 30,000 people for at least a year — which face the real prospect of running dry.

A furious Ms Pavey said last night: "I would like to see evidence that this was the best time to release water for the environment when the Bureau of Meteorology is indicating little to no inflows over the next 12 months."

She added: "Even swamps suffer drought."

A spokesman for the

CEWH said yesterday the water had "provided critical flows throughout the length of the Lachlan to improve the health of the river system and make it more resilient in the face of possible ongoing drought conditions".

One senior source from the green agency cited catfish, crayfish and freshwater shrimp as important beneficiaries of the environmental decision. They also insisted state bodies and local figures had been consulted on the release of the water.

But Ms Pavey accused the agency of "blind recklessness".

"Over the past year the Lachlan Valley has

Dec 2019



Speculators and foreign-owned irrigators park their trades on NSW Government account

# Minister peddles water

By PETER HUNT

SOME of the Murray Darling Basin's largest foreign-owned irrigation corporations and speculators are parking water on NSW Environmental Minister Matt Kean's accounts.

An analysis of trades shows Canadian-owned Webster Ltd and Aroona Farms, speculator Duxton Water, goFarm's Cadell Orchard and others have transferred Murray River water on to and off Mr Kean's Murrumbidgee water access licences in the past 12 months.

Mr Kean's WAL 36338 is listed on the NSW Environmental Water Register as a Murrumbidgee Regulated water licence that is "wholly committed to the environment at the time of trade".

The Weekly Times was able to track about 6500 megalitres of water, worth more than \$2.5 million, that private corporations transferred on to Mr Kean's WAL 36338 in the lead-up to June 30.

That same volume was then transferred back again as zero-value trades in July, indicating

the minister was leasing out air space for those wanting to carry over water from 2019-20 into this irrigation season.

But other trades were difficult to track, with three parcels totalling 2593ML shifted off Mr Kean's environmental WAL from October 2019 to February this year as zero-value trades to Webster Ltd, which is owned by the Canadian Public Sector Pension Investment Board.

Another three parcels totalling 873ML were transferred to speculators Duxton Water on

July 1 this year, plus 2000ML to the Australian Executors Nominees.

The register also showed another 3000ML was transferred off the minister's WAL on July 1 to South Australian almond company Aroona Farms, which is owned by the Ontario Teachers' Pension Fund, as part of a carryover deal.

Carrying over water on the Murrumbidgee instead of the Murray systems, would have saved companies holding water on Mr Kean's environ-

mental WAL36338 about \$30-\$40 a megalitre.

In the lead-up to June 30 Murray (below choke) carryover space was available for lease at \$60-\$70/ML, compared with \$30-\$40/ML on the Murrumbidgee.

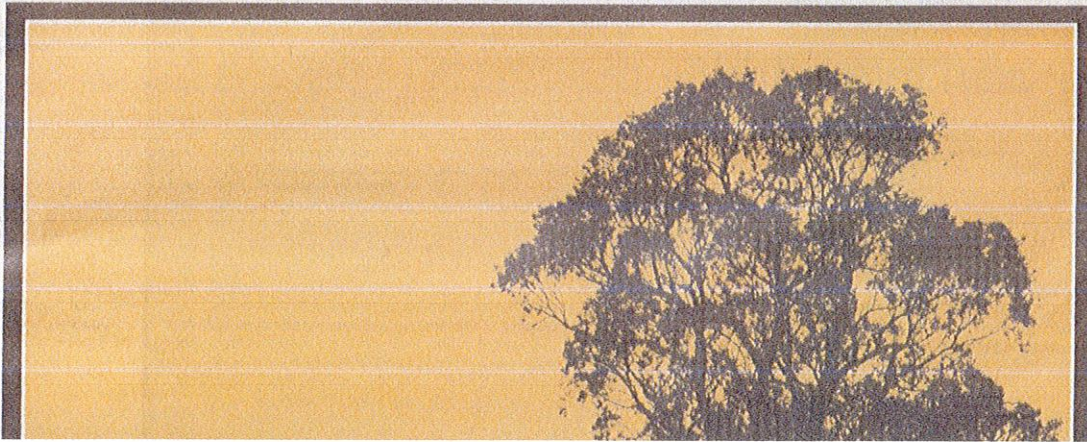
Irrigators have raised questions about the minister's dealings in leasing air space on his environmental entitlements to big corporate players.

"Is there a process where it's open to all or is it just for a privileged few?" Victorian Farmers Federation water council chair-

man Richard Anderson said. "Does it go to tender?"

Mr Kean referred The Weekly Times to his departmental staff, who said the Government "trades in the same way as other water users in a 'blind market' through broker networks and online platforms".

"In 2019-20, the department contracted as a service to other licence holders in the Murrumbidgee regulated river the carryover of a total 9373ML of allocation for total revenue of approximately \$300,000," the department staff said.



## Short days for NAB branches

By HANNAH DRISCOLL

NAB is to cut opening hours to three hours per day at 114 "smaller regional branches".

Opening hours will be slashed to 9.30am-12.30pm from August 17 at the affected branches, the bank announced last week.

Among the 28 Victorian branches affected are Castlemaine, Heathcote, Kerang, Nhill, Tatura, Cobden, Terang and Timboon. Corangamite mayor Neil

**How does some of the Murray Darling Basin's largest foreign-owned irrigation cooperation's and speculators, park their water on the NSW Environmental Account?????**

**How do you park water? Some one is very smart I did not know that one could park water, (Rain.) Or lease air space.**



# WATER IS THE LIFE BLOOD OF THE MURRUMBIDGEE IRRIGATION AREA

Orange trees are left to die no water







*The MIA Flood water's --- Griffith Railway line 27/6/1931*

NEWSLETTER VOLUME 21, September 1999

**ENVIRONMENTAL FLOW AGREED TO**

Full environmental release will not occur this season until Burrinjuck Dam reach 50% capacity.

The revised rules, decided by Murrumbidgee Management Committee, will benefit both irrigators and the environment by borrowing water from the environment, the early predictability of irrigation allocation will improve, resulting this season in increase of four per cent in the initial general security allocation announcement to 50 per cent.

Since then Committee member and the DLWC have worked on proposal to provide outcome acceptable to the diverse interests within the valley while maintain the principles developed in 1998/99.

The modified flow rules include two storage thresholds in Burrinjuck Dam of 30 per cent and 50 per cent below which environmental (translucent) release are limited full environmental release will not occur until the dam reaches 50 per cent capacity.

The Chair of the Committee, Professor Kath Bowmer says that under translucency rules a portion of the inflow to flow through to the river to restore some variability in winter and spring. These translucency flows are available from both environmental and consumptive needs where appropriate.

However, water specifically reserved for the environment, known as environmental contingency flows, will not able available for off-allocation access.

The translucency rule was designed to reflect climatic condition; release made so far this year have only been about 13 per cent of the total inflow, reflecting the dry conditions in the upper catchment. The recent higher river flows are largely due to higher tributary inflows below Burrinjuck and Blowering Dams.

**Orange Juice**

1<sup>st</sup> Sept 1999: Imports of frozen orange concentrate hit a high record of 548,000 tonnes in past financial year, light crop of Valencia oranges.



Water prices. There will be an increase of 2.058 % in water prices this season, the increase will be reflected in usage charges. Land and Water Management Plan charges will also be collected at the rate.

For general security rate of \$0.13/ ML  
For high security rate of \$0.30/ ML  
For town water rate of \$1.00 /ML

The bulk water charge which was set by State Water, and will increase by 13 per cent. The fixed charges will be \$2.42/ML of allocation and general security it will be \$2.29/ML of allocation. The usage charge will be \$0.82/ML for all usage.

1999 -2000 **HIGH SECURITY irrigation farmers in the MIA give 5 per cent of their water allocation to the environment. And General Security 15%**

#### **MIA 2000 Grape Marketing Board**

The year 2000 was the year that the NSW government deregulated the Grape Marketing Board. The government took the rights away from the board to negotiate grape prices with the wineries. (It called competition) Each winery has a different price for wine grapes, and some times farmers deliver their wine grapes and do not knowing what price they are getting for their wine grapes per tonne.

October 2013 MIA grape growers are concerned that the Winemakers are refusing to sign the industry code of conduct, Orlando Winery has signed up.

The code is designed to give growers more confidence when doing business with wineries by prescribing transaction and dispute resolution guidelines.

The Winemakers' Federation of Australia collaborated with the Wine Grape Growers Australia on the code of conduct, so far only 33 wineries and less than half of WFA board members have signed up.

#### **1<sup>st</sup> July 2000 Deregulation of the milk industry**

Federal government National Minister for Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry Warren Truss, 28<sup>th</sup> September 1999 has agreed to assist dairy farmers in the deregulation of the dairy industry. Australian dairy farmers were all major owners of the dairy processing plants.

The number of North Queensland dairy farmers economically viable were reduce from over 500 farms in the late 1990, and in 2010 to just 55 dairy farmers.

The value of dairy after deregulation: Australian dairy export fell from \$2.67 billion in 2001 to only \$1.98 billion in 2004. The price to the consumer roses 41 cents a litre, and the farmer price fell 19 cents per litre from 53 cents per litre to 34 cents after deregulation.

Business who supplied the dairy farmers, feed suppliers, transport, contractors and many more went out of business

10<sup>th</sup> August 2013 ABC Country Rural. The state of Queensland has to import milk from other states. Dairy farmers have been going out of business the last 2 years, on account of low prices

#### **Drought 2000**

The year 2000 - 2001 was the start of the drought. The only trouble we did not know how long it was going to last! 9 years.

Farmers went out and got themselves a job, when they could not plant their rice crop, and other went and brought water to plant their rockmelons crops.

**Sugar:** in the year 2002 government of the day Liberal - National party deregulated the sugar industry and abolished tariffs. Cane farmers who received \$473 per tonne, after deregulation the price came down to \$279 per tonne a loss of \$191 per tonne.