

2/11/19

Fran Pietroboni [REDACTED]
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Murray Darling Basin plan inquiry

Waterinquire @ ACCC ,gov,au

Trading rain like shares Who owns the rain?

In 1999 Victoria consulting economists came up with a report that recommended that 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, water became a business to be traded and sold, and how do you trade rain?

The question that we should be asking in regards to rain, who owns the rain??? It has been said that in principle we do, Theoretically, Australians own all the rain that falls in Australia, that rain becomes a lake, rivers and streams that flow over the land, and the underground water that flows beneath it. That's our water. It's our common property, our birthright and water stored in dams?

If you have a rain tank that the rain falls on your roof it is your property. Water has become a complicated issue, every few years we have droughts in 2001 it lasted for 9 years, and then the rain came in 2010, 2012 floods that devastated Yenda and other towns in NSW, Victoria and in 2016 More rain and floods only this time Yenda was spared, the Darlington Point road to Hay had water lapping the side of the road, and the Murray River was in flood, and all the dams were overflowing, and farmers along the Murray River went under.

The story goes that the farmer was about to lose his sheep and out of the night, people came in their boats to help by cutting the fences and lifting the wet sheep into the boat and taking them to higher ground, and then we have the invisible drought 2018 -2019 that no one saw coming, only the people living in the bush where it has not rained, and the soil and dams have dried out and the rain tanks run empty.

Fran Pietroboni

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Editor
The Area News
Banna Ave
Griffith 2680

Dear Editor

Re Murray Darling Basin Plan -- Australian Constitution

Section 100 of our Australian Constitution reads:

The Commonwealth shall not abridge the right of State or of the residents there into the reasonable use of the water of river for conservation or irrigation.

History will tell the Australian people that the Minister for the environment in the Howard Government was Malcom Turnbull who came up with the Water Act 2007 (international instruments) the Act has put birds before of (legal) necessity, and has caused mismanagement of the waterways in the Basin effecting not only the people and their properties, but has resulted in erosion of river-banks dead trees and fish all in the name of environment that it was supposed to save.

**Water should not be a tool to be traded and sold. The water should be vested in the CROWN. The water in the Burrinjuck Dam was built for the MIA to produce food, and from it the water should belong to the people of NSW. It was built with taxpayers' money.
Who controls our water?. It is the CROWN of AUSTRALIA.**

The year of 1896, the Government of the day passed into law, the WATER RIGHTS BILL that water conservation provided that all flowing water be VESTED IN THE CROWN and farmers drew water from rivers for domestic and watering stock, and to irrigate, one required a licence to pump water out of the rivers.

Yours Sincerely

2018-19 Then you have the other side of the coin where Murray irrigators have 0% water allocation, and the MIA water allocation is at 7%.

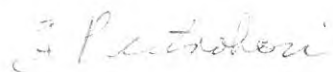
The Hume Dam was built in 1936 and Eildon in 1955 and then in 1973 construction of the Dartmouth Dam, was built by Victoria Rural Water Commission and was completed in 1979 and for the past 40 years, it has starved off droughts and has saved the nation, and today is operated by the Murray Darling Basin Authority.

25th Aug 2018. The Dartmouth Dam stands at 90 %, Hume 50% inflow 1,200 ml. Blowering Dam 75% water release 5,500 ml inflow 4960 ml

We are a sun burn country of floods, droughts and bush fires by letting the grass grow, and not letting cattle graze on the grass in times of drought to minimise the risk of fire to our environment, fires are more dangerous to people our national parks, native animals, livestock then animals grazing to control grasses, there is more risk of fire that destroys homes, lives, Machinery, crops, stock, wild life then control grazing, we should under control grazing allow stock to graze in national parks.

The MIA has to thank the 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, and the first reported ^{area} ~~are~~ to produce a crop of wheat near Coolamon in 1850, and most settlers stayed close to the rivers and creeks.

Yours sincerely



Cruickshank welcomes water/land changes

ADRIAN Cruickshank has welcomed the Government's decision to deregulate land and water controls in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area.

The Member for Murrumbidgee said that farmers must improve their competitive situation.

"Farmers will have to become more efficient or grow something of higher value, or expand their holdings in order to lower their cost of production or probably have to do all three," he said.

"The bulk of land and water controls has been a

restriction, a disguised monopoly that has limited development and flexibility for the MIA."

As a consequence there has been a drift from the MIA into non-regulated areas such as Mudgee, Hillston and Corowa and the MIA has lost valuable investments, he said.

The changes will be gradual, warned Mr Cruickshank, with no one forced out of any industry.

"The Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area has the land, the water and the expertise, and the area will now be allowed to expand

to provide a secure future for following generations," Mr Cruickshank said.

"The concentration of wineries in this area is a tremendous asset, the Letona Cannery is still operating, and the doubling of vegetable growing areas shows something of the available potential.

"I don't believe it is possible for the Government to determine what area a farmer can or cannot live on, or what he can or cannot grow. That is the right of the individual.

Deregulation to occur: Causley

THE Government will relax land and water controls in the MIA and other irrigation districts announced the Minister for Natural Resources, Ian Causley, late yesterday afternoon.

The minister said although submissions received from interested groups on the deregulation proposal had been quite varied he still believed that deregulation should occur.

"It is the only way to ensure the future viability of the irrigation areas," he said.

"I have discussed the issue at length with Member for Murrumbidgee, Adrian Cruickshank and he has convinced me of the need for immediate total deregulation."

One major aspect of the reforms will be the abolition of home maintenance area controls which are "no longer seen, as appropriate or necessary if the areas are to remain competitive and viable."

Land use planning control in the areas will be transferred to local Government so that subdivision of agricultural land and restricted-title land used for urban purposes will reflect council LEP guidelines.

"The deregulation will mean that any legal entity from individuals to companies, both private and



Ian Causley MP

public, will be able to hold unlimited areas," said the minister.

"However, legislation will be required to permit corporations to hold land in the areas.

"The Department of Water Resources will maintain two levels of water supply security where permanent plantings may be grown only on high-

security water entitlements.

"However, I previously sought the involvement of the various valley advisory committees and boards State-wide in assessing whether this constraint should continue.

"I will await the advice from these committees and Boards before moving on this issue."

Until the issue of growing permanent plantings on low-security water is resolved, new horticultural developments will only be approved on the basis that at least nine ML per hectare of high-security entitlements is attached to the land.

The conversion schemes to be developed will allow up to 50,000 megalitres of normal-security water to be converted into smaller amounts of high-security entitlements as a first step.

At a later stage, further conversions could occur providing it does not affect the security of existing users.

"It must be emphasised that the Government is very concerned about the threat posed by the addition of highly saline drainage effluent to both the Murrumbidgee and Murray systems and each application for new horticulture will be assessed carefully," said Mr Causley.

"In this regard, I would not be happy for large increases in horticulture unless drip or micro-jet technology was utilised."

"I recognise that much anguish has been expressed over these very important issues. However, both myself and Mr Cruickshank are confident relaxation of the controls will add significantly to the prosperity of the Areas and Districts and to the economy of NSW," he concluded.



PROPERTY RIGHTS TO WATER THE KEY TO SECURITY IN MIA
AREA NEWS 26th JUNE 1999

2/11/2019

Fran Pietroboni

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The Federal Government on the green paper on dams. (History has a habit of repeating it self)

when it comes to drought proofing the region, what was built for our region was the Barren Jack dam, and today we have the Murray Darling Basin Plan to takes away 42% of water from our farmers for the environment, take note that the environmental water come from the Burrinjuck Dam. Before the Barren Jack was built John Oxley and his party explored our area in 1817 and what he saw was a country of desolation, drought and bareness; they had arrived at Mt Brogden near the township of Yenda to day.

The Cycle of drought 1862, 1865, 1870 and the big drought of 1895 to 1903, drought was over most of NSW, Northern Victoria and South Queensland; good rains did not come until April 1903. And in 1938 -1939 drought then floods, 1982-1983, Blowering Dam empty, 1994 - 1995 dust storm that came rolling over Binya Hills, and the big drought 2001 to 2010, the rain came everything came to life.

Burrinjuck Dam was built to conserve water, and water is the life blood of the MIA, people made a go of it with hard work, producing fruit, vegetables, wheat, rice, cattle and sheep, the MIA became a success story and you would find a job in the MIA, and now? Buy back of water by the Commonwealth Government for the environment.

August 2018 drought over most of NSW, Victoria and parts of Queensland, and up until 2013 governments paid half farmers' freight for fodder and water during drought. And in 2018 Governments see drought is no longer declared a natural disaster, even though it is as devastating as floods and fire.

It is time to think of reinvesting in water to drought proof inland and country towns, the Scheme to Divert Tributaries of the Clarence River to the Murray-Darling Basin, the consulting Engineer who came up with the scheme David Coffey in 1984. Water for the Darling River would provide water for Broken Hill and other towns along the river.

Yours Sincerely

F. Pietroboni

Fran Pietroboni [REDACTED]

The Area News

Editor Griffith 2680

Dear Editor Re the Murray Darling Basin Plan and what we should know about our history, that in January 1829 Sturt and Hume exploring the interior found a river that promised to reward all. Eager to quench their thirst the sun so powerful, Sturt and Hume were disappointed to find the water unfit to drink it was so salty. The phenomenon of the Salty River was puzzling to Sturt and too familiar, the long continued drought had lowered the river. The size of the river and the saltiness of the water, the party were convinced that they were near an inland sea, for 6 days Sturts party travelled down the river finding no change in the river until they discovered the saline spring in the banks, no fresh water could be found the animals were weak and exhausted, Sturt christened the River the Darling.

In April 1829 Sturt and Hume during the short time they were exploring the interior and in such a season and the state of the country over which Sturt had wandered. Sturt had seen the River cease to flow the water disappeared and as long as the drought continued the vegetation had disappeared and was almost annihilated. Sturt retreated from the inhospitable Darling. Sturt expedition was known as the mystery of the Macquarie Marshes and the Lachlan Rivers having failed to reach the interior, they were determined to try the Murrumbidgee River

Captain Sturt on the 3rd November 1829 left Sydney on his expedition to the Murrumbidgee River to find the way to the sea, down the Murrumbidgee River care had to be taken as the river been full of snags and fallen timber and the danger of navigation increased, the men looked anxiously ahead for the changes in the river and some adventure, suddenly the river changed to a southern direction in its tortuous course, Sturt and his men were approaching a junction and less than a minute, they found themselves in a broad and noble river, they had been shot out of the Murrumbidgee into the Murray . Once more down the united streams of the Murray, and then a new discovery of a new river, was it that mysterious river the Darling?.

Down the streams of the Murray and the Darling the party made rapid progress landing occasionally. The men cheered by the sight of the sea-gulls they were near the sea. On the 9th February Sturt saw before him a lake that terminated the MURRAY, CROSSING THE LAKE the little band landed on the southern shores and ascertained that the communication between it and the sea was impracticable on account of its extreme shallowness.

ON THE RETURN JOURNEY they all took turns at oars, for days they struggled up stream men falling asleep at the oars. On the 8th April 1830 it had taken Eighty Eight days from start to finish. Sturt and his men had travelled two thousand miles. This expedition is regarded as the most important contribution ever made to Australian Geography.

Sturt wrote his disappointment that they had suddenly been confronted with a new experience. And they could associated with nothing, the idea of a desert that all this seemingly desolated waste, should one day have a value of its own and what they could hardly dream of .

Re Drought 1895 to 1903 t.

Australian law was governed by British law that country drainage of water from the land was necessary. The government of the day for ten years did nothing; the law to change the Riparian Rights were completely ignored until the next major drought 1895 to 1903 - 9 years.

Since our recent drought 2001 to 2010 - 9 years our Prime Minister John Howard in 2007 started the MDBP.

Farmers and settlers unanimously carried a resolution asking the government to resume their land : The men who brought the matter up lived in the district and knew what they were talking about, and the government did nothing, the land holders were practically ruined by drought, no grass, no crops. Sheep and cattle were reduced. The settlers had to borrow money, send their sheep away or paid for feed at high prices to save their animals, and in September they had a record rainfall but the settlers had hardly any stock and did not have the money to buy new stocks

The Royal Commission was establish a sub - department of water conservation; the law had to be changed for Australia is a dry country. The Commission recommended that the State establish ownership of all rivers and water courses. 1905 Another conference on water conservation was held in NSW. Chairman Sir William Lyre who presided in 1884, 20 years had passed and nothing had been done on irrigation.

The settlers for 10 years had been losing money, now was the time to make use of water, the Gunbar branch of the Settlers Mr W H Gibson said "if they did not get irrigation they would have to leave the area" The same situation could be said for the latter here – today.

The site that was chosen for the off take from the Murrumbidgee River near the town of Narrandera, with a branch canal to serve the country around Hay and Booligal, and a storage dam at Barren Jack was included in the plan. Our first railway line was built to service Narrandera and Hay.

Re the Barren Jack Dam and know our history that nothing has change with drought.

The proposed Northern Murrumbidgee Irrigation Scheme and the Barren Jack Reservoir was referred to Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works. The first hearing was held in January 1906 on the scheme proposed by Robson Gibson, inquiry lasted for 9 months and all aspects of irrigation was carried out by the Committee. The Committee took evidence from squatters and selectors in the proposed are to be irrigated.

Governments have failed over many years of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Scheme. As to provide a railway line it was urgent need, the canals were been excavated with horses scoop and plough working a slow progress across the plains. Politicians ignored everything except what appealed to political instinct at election time. The Sydney Morning Herald made positive suggestion, and were ignored by both political parties in their anxiety to ridicule each other. 1906 General Election. The settlement of the MIA stared at Yanco and not as it was originally intended to start at Mirrool.

General election were held on the 14th October 1910 and NSW had its first Labour Government James McGowan became Premier and Treasurer, and pass an enabling act in December 1910 – Murrumbidgee Irrigation Act..

The big drought of 2001 to 2010 of 9 years saw the Liberal Government who started the Murray Darling Plan in 2007, and the Labour Government continued it. Water for the environment it sound great, but what was there before the dams were built?

When you take 42% of water from the farmers, and how would you like a cut from your business or wages of 42%? Stop and think what do we know about MDBP implementation plan due in 2019 and **its full effect will not be known until 2024? – Another concern we need to take into account another five years of uncertainty.**

Governments would rather import our food?

Yours faithfully

F. Pietroboni

Fran Pietroboni

..History, exploration of the Macquarie.

28-2-2012

Frances Pietroboni

The cycle of drought has been since the first white man explored Australia.

Some years ago our water bailiff said to me. "Fran the Burrinjuck Dam was built for the MIA to irrigate and produce food, and the Blowering Dam for Colembally irrigation Area, and can't you see what they are doing, and they are selling the water down stream" The drip to irrigate the farms may save water, but the cost of electric is not cheap."

Our forefathers were smarter then to day's people they cared, and did ever thing the hard way. With a horse and trailer no tractors, we have come a long way now!

John Oxley 1785 --1828

John Oxley in 1817 was the first explorer to explore the Riverina. John Oxley saw our area a country of desolation drought and bareness. Oxley party on the 3rd June 1817 arrived at Mt Brogden near the township of Yenda to day; they were some distance from the Murrumbidgee River.

History across the Black Soil Plains
By R.M. Brennan

EXPLORATION OF THE MACQUARIE VALLEY IN 1818 by JOHN OXLEY

The 2nd June 1818 John Oxley and his party arrived at the Wellington Valley. There he found his party who were building boats, and had completed building two boats on the banks of the Bell River they set off on the 7th June 1818.

The party moved down the Macquarie River without incident. Kangaroos, swans and ducks were shot for food.

On the 24th June Oxley saw the country as extremely flat and over run by acacia, dwarf box eucalyptus and other species, and numerous lagoons now quite dry, the soil was rich.

27th June Oxley and his party had gone about 10 miles through a country as low and bushy, when they were surprised with the view of a small hill, about 3 mile to the eastward and on arriving at the top of the hill what they saw was nothing but another hill,

28th June the next day the party needed a rested near Mt. Harris.

30th Oxley and his party had gone some miles, and found that the water had overflowed the banks and were spreading over the plains; the safety of the party was Oxley concerned,

On the 1st July water was not rising and preparation was made to proceed down the river. One would go with the horses to Mt. Harries and return with provisions.

The 2nd July Oxley proceeded down the river during one of the wettest and stormy days that Oxley had yet to experienced, vast country of timber were under water, and reed which grew a hight of 6 to 7 feet.

The 3rd July a stormy night and at daylight the storm had abated. Oxley and his party move on after 20 miles we lost the land and trees.

On the 10th July the river began to rise rapidly, and on the 15th July in the evening the river was at its height spreading out of the whole of the low country under water, and insulating us on the spot on which we were. In the morning the water had return as rapidly as it had risen.

The 18th July the weather was very variable unsettle gales winds came from N. W. to S. W. and occasional rain.

19th July a bad night thunder, lighting and rain.

25th July. Nine miles, and up to our middle in water the whole way.

26th July. Dreadful night, cold, wind and rain.

27th July Oxley decided to retreat to the river Castlereagh.

THERE IS NO RECORD OF WHITE MAN TRAVELLING PAST THE SITE OF WARREN FOR TEN YEARS AFTER OXLEY JOURNEY.

CHARLES STURT 1828

On 7th December 1828 Charles Sturt under the instructions from Governor Macquarie. Sturt went to the Wellington Valley where everything was ready to start down the river.

The party consisted of two soldiers, eight prisoners of the crown Charles and Mr. Hume, and the animal's seven horses two draught and eight bullocks.

Owing to the extreme heat Sturt made a late start in the afternoon. Their first night was spent at Mr. Wylde's Station.

The next day they camped opposite where Moll's rivulet joins the Macquarie. Would probably be the stream known today as the Little River.

The second day they left at the junction of the Talbragar and Macquarie River, the out post of the settlement. On the third day the river was crossed to the right bank to avoid travelling around a big bend, and seeing Buddah Lake they once more moved to the left bank. Sadly Sturt was disappointed of the lake, in the appearance of the lake which natives called Buddah, the depth was 4 fathoms but it seemed as it was 5 or 6 feet below ordinary level, no stream run into or flowed out, in the afternoon the

Temperature was at 2 pm 129°F in the shade, and In the sun 149°F..

**(Temperature at 129° F, today's temperature it would be = 54° C)
(At 149°F the temperature would be 64°C)**

On the 20th December Sturt with his party travelled on a course N to W and the camp was set up. Mr. Hume and Mr. Sturt rode to Mt. Harris over ground subject to flood.

Nearly 10 years had past since Oxley had pitched his tents under the smaller of the two hills... There the remained the half burnt plank of a boat and an old trunk, the search for the bottle that Oxley had left behind was unsuccessful.

On the 22nd Dec the party moved to a point opposite Mt. Foster and Sturt crossed the river, and ascended to the hill to spy out the land. Observing some lofty trees at the extremity of the plain we moved towards them, but on this exposed spot the sun's rays fell intense power upon us and the dust was penetrating.

The 26th Dec it was decided that Sturt should launch the boat and take two men, and a week supplies and proceed down the stream. Sturt and his party were lost in astonishment at the sudden change, (they explored the marshes, and some days later Sturt decided to temporarily abandon.)

On the 13th January we left our position at head of the plain and had entered a very different country, from which we had been labouring for the past three weeks. The party eventually discovered the DARLING RIVER and followed its course to a point below BOURKE.

The dryness of the season caused Sturt to worry and the safety of his men at Mt. Harris, Sturt then made the decision to return to Mt. Harris.

On the 22nd February Sturt and his party crossed the plains of the MACQUARIE and surprised a number of tribe on the bank of the river.

The 23rd February the party I found waiting for our arrival at Mt. Harris, consisted of one soldier and Riley who was in charge of supplies and a dray man. Riley informed Sturt he had been a month and three weeks at the station. (Mt. Harries)
The camp was made snug; I thought it was a good opportunity to slaughter one of the bullocks.

THE MACQUARIE STURT FOUNDED HAD CEASED TO FLOW.

The natives set fire to the great marshes, the natives were in a starving condition.

Mr. Riley's and his party left on the 7th March for Wellington Valley.

We remained the party now moved over to the Castlereach, and followed it and the Marthaguy Creek to their junction with Barwon at a point near Walgett, water was scarce and the natives were DYING OF STARVATION, so it was with great relief we

return to Mt. Harris on the 7th April 1829 the party moved up the Macquarie River had ceased to run and in some places, the bed was dry for hundred of yards.

On the 21st April after four months and two weeks we reached the Wellington Valley.

HISTORY HAS A HABIT OF REPEATING IT SELF. OUR RIVERS WOULD NEARLY RUN DRY. AND WE WOULD NOT BE HERE TO DAY IF IT WAS NOT FOR OUR DAMS.

THOMAS MITCHELL 1846

Thomas Mitchell on the 12th February 1846, made the journey to the Barwon and via The Macquarie marshes. At the thirteen miles we reached the west branch of the Duck Creek or Marra, a name by which it is universally know by the natives and stockmen.

The advance party to the Macquarie River, they camped on the bank of the river late in the afternoon.

The bed of the river was dry. Thomas found only two waterholes and examining the channels for two miles, one was deep and Sturt and his party camped near it, surrounded by excellent grass.

13th February Mitchell was trouble with sore eyes; I asked Mr. Stephenson to take a ride for me to the summit of Mt. Foster, and various cattle station about its base.

No one could tell what the country on the western side o the mashes was like, The country was more open on the east side, where the only the station were situated. Mr. Stephenson return early and my most important question, was there water to be found lower down the river?

Stevenson reported meeting two troopers who had followed the advancing floods for thirty miles the previous day, the drays reached the river about noon, they had covered a waterless twenty-eight miles from Canonba to the river.

We waited for the water to arrive around midnight. At last the rushing sound of the water and the loud cracking of timber announced the flood was around the next bend. It rush into our sight glittering in the moonlight, a moving cataract, tossing before it ancient trees and snapping them against the banks of the river. I am convinced the scene can not be forgotten. The river gradually filed up nearly bank high.

On the 16th F February our greatest difficulty in the mash was watering the cattle, We had the Macquarie at hand, it was deep muddy and stagnant water, the banks so soft that man could not approach with out sinking to his knee, we could water the horses with a bucket but not the bullocks.

On the 18th Feb Mitchell and his party camped on the edge of a soft bush plain, where a small waterhole provided enough water for men and horses but not enough for the cattle.

On the 20th Feb we came upon good water below the junction of Morisett Ponds and the Macquarie River, from here it was to be an easy day ride to the Barwon.

JUST OVER 18 YEARS HAD ELAPSED SINCE STURT VISIT TO THE MASHES and MITCHELL found them in an ever drier condition, and the flood in the river that had given Mitchell such joy proved to be of no value.

TEN YEARS SEPARTED THE FIRST TWO JOURNEYS OF EXPLORATION AND ANOTHER TEN OR MORE WERE TO ELAPSE, BEFORE THE MORE VENTURESOME OF PIONEERS BROUGHT THEIR CATTLE TO THE MACQUARIE FRONTAGE.

History has habit of repeating itself, drought, floods, bushfires. That is what Australia is all about. It is called climate change.

Our past people made Australia great by given us the DAMS to store water, without our dams we would not be able to irrigate to produce food, and we would not be here today.

Bush fire 1939

History will tell the story the hot summer of 1939. The big bushfires that took human lives, homes, stock and forests. A royal Commission on the fires, by Judge Stretton described the disaster:

Seventy-one lives lost, Sixty-nine mills were burned. Millions of acres of forest destroyed or badly damaged, townships, bridges, tramways, machinery, were burned to the ground, men cattle, horses, sheep were destroyed. The fire sped at a great pace, and the wind force in many places trees were torn out of the soil.

The disaster of this bush fire resulting in the tightening of regulations, and control in the lighting of fires in proclaimed areas, with the hope that fire – brakes, and water storages in certain areas was made compulsory, new fire equipment up to date and two way wireless sets. New rules with the hope it would save lives.

Murrumbidgee River in 1938-39 was in drought and the river nearly dry up. Then in March the rains came and Yoogali was in flood.

For a river to continued running it needs to rain, and in drought the rivers will stop running. What we need are more dams to store water.

When one travels out past the town ship of Cobar, the land scape is dry and the trees grow smaller the further you travel out west and it all depending on the rain fall, and then there is no trees the only trees you see is along a dry creek bed, where the water runs when it rains. Australia is a big country.

Australia has Lake Eyre when Lake Eyre is empty we have droughts, and when the Lake Eyre fill up with flood water from Queensland rivers the drought brakes, and the birds come to Lake Eyre.

Fran. 17th November 2012

The Barren Jack – MIA. W. R. Cowper

The history of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area and there is so much history to tell. For 30 years successive Government had their two bit say in the original proposal, and the financial difficulties of the MIA and indecisions by politicians and the land that had to be resumed for irrigation.

The story of Hugh McKinney was that he visited his sister Sarah wife of William Mc Gaw, with his brother Josoph McGaw they had taken up Kooba Station near Whitton on the North Side of the Murrumbidgee River. McKinney was an Irrigation Engineer and canal Magistrate with the irrigation Service of the British Government in India. McKinney came up with the idea of using the Murrumbidgee River water for irrigation.

1869

In 1869 L. A. B. Wade observed that various Governments treated water conservation with little respect, the only work carried by the government was when several water tanks were excavated along the inland routes by the Department of land.

In 1879 Hugh McKinney joined the Public Works Department of NSW.

History -- 1882 drought which effected New South Wales and Victoria.

The Governments of the day became interested in water Conservation, and resulted in appointment of a Royal Commission,

The first report that everyone shared in the suffering of adverse seasons, farmers and mining had been almost abandoned for lack of water.

1884

In 1884 McKinney was appointed Engineer to the Royal Commission. Inquiring for the best method of conserving rainfall, and searching for underground reservoirs in the interior of NSW, and a practicability of a general system of water conservation of averting the disastrous periodical drought which the colony was subject too.

It was considered the use of the river should be to produce something to transport
The Murrumbidgee was inferior to the Murray; the Murrumbidgee had a smaller discharge, and storage was most favourable on the upper Murrumbidgee.

Drought 1895 to 1903

Australian law was governed by the British law which had to be change before water conservation could be properly implemented.

The common law of Great Britain in regards to Riparian Rights which provided that the country drainage of water from the land was necessary.

For ten years the law to change the Riparian Rights was completely ignored, until the next major drought 1895 to 1903 is 9 years. – (our recent drought 2001 to 2010 is 9 years and then the rain came.)

Farmers and Settlers unanously carried a resolution asking the government to resume their land; the men who brought the matter up lived in the district and knew what they were talking about, and the government did nothing.

Royal Commission

New South Wales. The result from the Royal Commission was to establish a sub-department of water conservation. McKinney became Chief Engineer.

The law had to be changed Australia is a dry country.

The Commission recommended that the *State establish ownership of all rivers and watercourses,*

Power of construction and management of irrigation to be in charged the Public Works Department.

The Surveyor-General P.F. Adams suggested that a large supply of water could be diverted from the Snow River into the Murrumbidgee. The commission was of the opinion that it would be of great advantage if a portion of the Snowy water was diverted, a survey was to be carried out, but sever drought and the survey was abandon

Later a barometric survey was carried out and showed that a diversion was possible.

In 1891 a prepared plan was carried out and a survey for the Northern Murrumbidgee Canal.
1896

The Premier of NSW in 1896 was George Reid and member for Murrumbidgee was James Gormly. Who protested during the debate on the Water Rights Bill that the government was not dealing in a satisfactory way?

Dam

The visit of Colonel Home in regards to water conservation and storage. Home worked in India with Huge McKinney on irrigation project. Home favoured a storage dam at the outset. Mc Kinney plan was that the original intention was to bring the canal into operation and deal with storage at a later date.

The original plan was for water for irrigation to irrigate – Hay - Carrathool- Maude – North West – to Booligal.

The land holders were practically ruined by drought, no grass, crops, sheep and cattle were reduced. The Settlers had to borrow money, send their sheep away or paid for feed at hight prices to save their animals, and in September they had a record rainfall but they had hardly any stock, and did no have the money to buy new stock,

1900 McKinney then resigned he saw little hope of the government of the day carrying out any irrigation scheme.

Land Settlement

Carruthers the Liberal Government came to power on land settlement, in the drier part country between the Murrumbidgee and Lachlan Rivers, the land is the dries portion of the State.

The railway line was built to service Narrandera and Hay to transport Hays' wool to Sydney for sale, instead of Melbourne and Adelaide.

(2012 what year was the railway line to Hay decommissioned?)

1895 to 1904 legislation to resume large pastoral estates several attempts were made to settle men on the land. Parliament debated the railway line which ran alongside of the bank of the Murrumbidgee River, and one pastoralist who owned 461,000 acres of freehold land, with 70 miles of railway line frontage, and river frontage of 70 to 100 miles, there were varying in size of 70,000 to 500, 00 acres of freehold own by several estates.

1900

.In 1900 the member for Wagga James Gormly referred to that the railway line made an annual loss forty thousand pounds to fifty thousand pounds.

In the drier part of the state the country between Murrumbidgee and the Lachlan Rivers, *large areas of crown land and pastoral runs of selectors' holdings had been abandoned for want of water.*

Hugh McKinney with Robert Gibson of Hay they proposed to use the water were the rainfall was least. The land most suitable was between Whitton and Gunbar.

Frank Byrne was the member for Hay. 1902 the public works department was neglected in the deals with water conservation.

Hugh McKinney and Robert Gibson sought out the authority in 1902, from the government to carry out the Northern Murrumbidgee Canal and the Barren Jack Dam by private enterprise, the scheme was opposed by from all political parties, and the farmers' and Settlers' Association..

1904

1904 The closer Settlement Bill was passed, and it was open to resume large estates for closer settlement.

20 Years

1905 Another conference on water conservation was held in NSW. The Liberal Government announce a policy of water conservation and a closer Settlement policy.

Minister C. A. Lee for works and Chairman Sir William Lyre who presided in 1884, 20 years had passed and nothing had been done on irrigation.

Three major originally schemes that were proposed by McKinney, the canals north and south of the Murrumbidgee and the canal north of the Murray at Bungowannah.

The proposed irrigation schemes the Government of the day was unable or they were unwilling, but they had no objection to private enterprise in so doing.

Government would find it impossible to borrow the money for the scheme of water conservation.

One firm in England Gibson said was prepared to finance and carry out the scheme.

Gibson referred to English Company who had invested in station properties of Four Hundred Million pounds and made a loss.

The works to be carried out by private enterprise or by the Government, as long the interest of the community was safe guarded.

10 Years

The Settlers for 10 years they have been losing money, now was the time to make use of water, the Gunbar branch of the Settlers Mr. W. H. Gibson said "if they did not get irrigation they would have to leave the area."

Service the Area

The site that was chosen for the off take from the Murrumbidgee River near the town of Narrandera, with a branch canal to serve the country around Hay and Booligal.

A storage dam at Barren Jack was included in the plan. And there was a good site for a weir at Cudgell Creek with a canal off take to Oxley to service the area, and with a canal extending south – *westerly in the direction of Carrathool, Hay, Maude and north – west to Booligal.*

The Gibson Bill was re-submitted to Parliament on the 11 July 1905, and was referred to a Select Committee. The responsibility for water conservation and distribution was through the state.

Farmers and settlers of the district below Hay were united and decided that they preferred that the scheme be carried out by the Government.

Victoria 1905

Supply Commission, and the policy that the State ownership of all water resources.

Administration of the system by a commission independent of politics and Parliament.

The first corporate body of its kind in the world the independent and administration be free of politics and Victoria n Government abolish all local Trusts – with the exception of Mildura. The corporations will have the authority of Government.

Barren Jack Dam

The Proposed Northern Murrumbidgee Irrigation Scheme and BARREN JACK DAM

A select Committee was informed by L. A. B. Wade in September of 1903 that the Department of Public Works had submitted a plan for the proposed Murrumbidgee Irrigation Scheme.

The plan was not submitted for 3 years on the 7th September 1905 that the proposal went to the Minister.

Victoria was way ahead of New South Wales in regards to administration and management. New South Wales it was proposed that the works of construction and administration of the Irrigation Scheme would be carried out by the Water and Drainage Act of 1902.

The area could be irrigated by gravitation from the Murrumbidgee was that proposed plan by Wade

Hay Railway line

The land was classified as First Class Land and Second Class Land; the Department of Agriculture had carried out the survey. It was recommended that the Northern side of the river should be developed rather than the Southern Scheme, the northern side was with easy reach of the Narrandera – Hay railway line, the proposed canal would pass through Narrandera and go around the hills, on the plains in a north-westerly direction to a point of 132 miles from the offtake and ten miles north-east of Gumbar.

When the government scheme was first discussed the offtake of the canal was at Cudgell Creek which was two miles below Narrandera, and now the proposed offtake would be above Narrandera some 19 miles. The land south of Mirrool Creek was

Classified as Second Class for Irrigation, there were large pastoral holdings of North Yanco, Gogeldrie, Cuba (Kooba) and Benerembah, only when the proposed canal and reliable supply of water was affordable and subdivision of land.

The first class land the blocks would vary in size 20 acres to 80 acres of 1,000 blocks.

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works Inquiry.

The proposed Northern Murrumbidgee Irrigation Scheme and the Barren Jack Reservoir was referred to Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works,

The first hearing was held in January 1906 on the scheme proposed by Robert Gibson, the inquiry lasted for 9 months and all aspects of irrigation was carried out by the Committee, the committee visited Mildura and other places, as well as Narrandera, Hay, Whitton, Gunbar, Mount Id, the Committee took evidence from squatters and selectors in the proposed area to be irrigated

The diversity of opinion as to the nature of the scheme was revealed in the Parliament debate and too many Bills in regard to the Murrumbidgee Scheme.

Construction Bill

The Barren Jack Dam and the Murrumbidgee Canals Construction Bill

The Hon. J. Hughes introduced into the Legislative Council the Bill, that proposed certain lands in the irrigation area should be resumed -- other lands on the northern side which are not to be purposed to be interfered with and may be supplied by gravitation with water from the reservoir . Hughes was confused

Farmers and Settlers on the War Path

The years between 1906 to 1910, while the dam and canal were being constructed. The Farmers' and Settlers' Association had a change of heart toward the irrigation scheme The annual Conference July 1908 A.E. bull of Whitton said that he held land which was to be resumed, while the large estates were not to be touched,. The resumption of land was to be completed; settlers must insist that resumption of land does not only apply to small settles while large holders are exempted.

The Farmers and Settlers Association held there conference in July 1910, the Wade Government was not popular with the farmers; there was talk of forming a Country Party.

General Election 1906

Governments failed over many years of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Scheme, as to provide a railway line it was an urgent need, the canals were been excavated with horses scoop and plough working a slow progress across the plains.

Politicians ignored everything except what appealed to political instincts at election time, General Election 1906.

The positive suggestions made by the Sydney Morning Herald, were ignored by both political parties in their anxiety to ridicule each other. . The settlement of the MIA stared at Yanco and not as it was originally intended to start at Mirrool.

The general election were held on the 14 October 1910, and New South Wales had its first Labour Government James McGowan became Premier and Treasure. Labour

had 41 seats, Liberal 37, Independent Labour 5, Independent Liberal 6, and 1 Independent. Labour had 46 and Liberal 44. (Interesting)

MIA Act

The MIA was excluded from the provisions of the local Government Act. The PUBLIC Works Department established a local office at Yanco, and in June 1912

The office was transferred to a Trust, the senior officers remain in Sydney and everything had to be referred to Sydney, and that would take time to travel back and forward. .

The Murrumbidgee Irrigation Act constituted the Trust and provided the authority for the acquisition of land, and levying rates and the general administration of the Irrigation Area. So much work and heart ache went into the establishment of the MIA and so many people had there say, and they were all inexperienced but they had a go at it, and do we not learn by our mistake.

The Minister for Works and Chairman of the Trust Arthur Griffith in July 1912 officially opened the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Scheme, and said that he believed that the settlement that was established, and to be the most successful irrigation area in the world, and it will be an insurance against drought.

November 1912 the cost it was announced to be Three Million Pounds and not the estimated of Two Million and Five Hundred Thousand Pounds, the Minister for Agriculture was J. L. Trefle who had travelled to Yanco. The scheme was to have been amended for the main canal to be enlarged.

Yanco had the first Experiment Farm. It should be remembered that the MIA was a big experiment there was a lot of hard work and heart ache and it was successful, until a politician in the city who did not understand that drought has been around since time began, the drought of 2001 to 2010 of 9 years.

Governments of the day panic and came up with the Murrumbidgee Darling Basin, to take water from our farmers, and our dams for the environment flow, before the dams? people could not make a good living out of farming it was boom and then bust, water should be stored and the only way is to store the water is in a dam, we would not be here today. Australia is a big country it is dry, and we have floods and bush fires.

1912

History has a habit of repeating itself, why was the Mirrool rejected and Yanco chosen, who was responsible for the decision?

Government of the day had imposed bureaucratic conditions upon the settlers.

Red tape and the knots were tied in Sydney; the settlers should be consulted as they lived in the area, the proposed railway line connections and the watering seasons.

The settlers complained of high cost to transport their goods carried by horse and wagon from Yanco to Leeton as there was no railway line.

The MIA without doubt the disaster of political control and the cost to bear was Thirty Pounds per acre too big a cost. The MIA was concept ahead of its time.

A Labour Government had won power for the first time in New South Wales.

People made a go of it with hard work growing fruit, vegetables, cattle, sheep, wheat rice the MIA did become a success, and you would always find a job in the MIA.

2013

2013 Nothing has changed in regards to our Australian politicians they are there for who?

June 21st 2013 it was reported in the Telegraph that Tony is going to turn the tap on up north, and build Dams and grow Veggies for Asia food bowl.

When you have travelled up north with AD tours and met a young farmer from Culcairn, who was in the tourist game and was taken us on a boat ride on the Ord River to the base of the Ord Dam, then we had lunch at a road side café. What he said "it cost to send your goods to the market, and spare parts the freight is dearer than the spare parts". The houses had no gutters on account of the rains (monsoon) and cyclones.

We toured Ord River irrigation Valley the area produced tropical fruit, Sandal Wood is a plant that is produced for perfume, sugar cane, rockmelons and the growing season is only 6 months then the wet season starts.

Why would one go up north when we have the MIA? Is it because those who are in power do not know the history that before the dams were built we had droughts floods and bush fire and the settlers of the day found it hard to make a living without water.

The country was dry very little rain: good country for growing produce and no disease.

It was the Liberal government who started the Murray Darling Base Plan 2007 and the labour government continued it.

Why when you have the Burrinjuck Dam and Blowering Dam, the government to take 42% of water from our farmers they could feed the world?

Had 4/10

February 2014

And now farmers have to content with a state government LNP who supports Coal Seam Gas, and the Murray Basin Plan to take water from farmers.

Exploration of CSG at Hillston farmers are concerned in regards to the Lachlan River and underground water the aquifers. We know very little only what we have been told. With water one can produce food with good soil and we need water to drink to keep us alive, without water we all wither and die. Gas can only keep you warm.

Fran Pietroboni

part 1

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Editor

the Daily Advertiser

Box 35 PO

Wagga Wagga 2650

Dear Editor

27/7 /19 Here comes the Bailiff a true story

History has a story to tell.

On the 3rd 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

Hear 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 returned; 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 leaves what was left over for the grower.

Ted told Doris that he purchased a farm, and it's off the beaten track, dead end of the road, up against Mirrool Creek branch canal, this chap is a good old pioneer type who tool 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 there 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, the first President was Jack Kelly. Most people had a horse and sulky to travel to town, and Ted was able to pick up a light utility for five pounds deposit, Ted said we have to go easy on our living expenses 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 the Bilbul Post Office, Ted turned right, the powdery red dust rose in choking clouds; The house our home had two small windows and a door, the outside was undressed 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 neighbour's miles away, no phone, no electricity and a 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.

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.

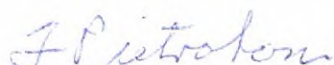
Water allocation for NSW irrigators for the start of this coming season stand at 0% 1-7-2019.

South Australia water allocation stands at 100%.

Who drained our dams in times of drought and left our farmers high and dry?

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

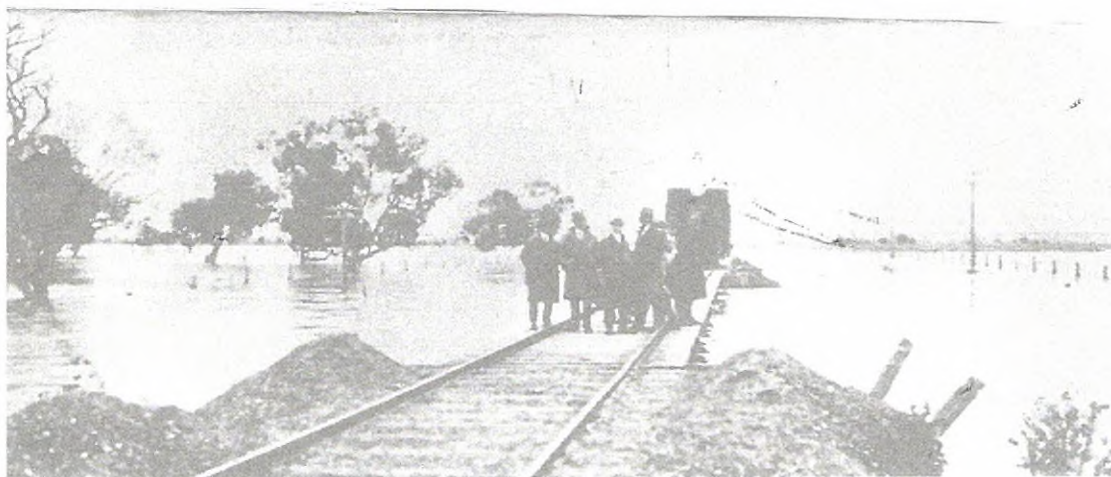
Yours Sincerely





THE

MIA 916: Yenda square, 30/6/1931



MIA 911: Leeton Griffith Railway line, 27/6/1931

GROWING OF RICE

In the years after the 1914-18 war, high hopes were held for the future of soldier settlement in the newly open Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area allocated to the return soldier. There were heartbreaks, and for some disaster and disappointments.

The growing of RICE was decided with a small parcel of seeds brought from America by Mr. John Bradly.

A young city girl married a return soldier Ted Cheesborough, one who loved the land and set about being the first to grow rice at Bilbul One has to laugh and cry at what Doris had to go through in those days. I can relate at what Doris wrote in her book. HERE COMES THE BAILIFF.

March 1939 Peter and Elsa Sartor

It is what my mother Elsa went through; my mother had to carry buckets of water to do the washing from the dam, and we lived in a corrugated shed with bags lined the kitchen wall, a wood stove to cook and to keep warm in winter, summer was hot and dusty and no electricity.

My father Peter came out from Italy in 1939 with his family, the drought of 1939 had broken and what met my father and mother were the floods of 1939.

20/04/2019

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Editor

The Area News

Dear Editor

Frogs and water came together

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 90th 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.



How Gree



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



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.



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

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.



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

And water should not be a business to be sold and traded like shares.
18% of water entitlements have snapped up by the government and outsider investors.

OUR FARMS FOR SALE

The woolly jumpers heading for China

SAMANTHA TOWNSEND

HE has the arm hook nailed and the strut is rural confidence personified. The one thing missing from this iconic Australian image is the Akubra.

This dusty sheep paddock in the state's southwest is as far away from Shanghai as you can get but sets the stage for Vogue China's latest photo shoot to promote Australian wool.

With their backs bowed in an echo of Tom Roberts' masterpiece *Shearing The Rams*, shearers clipped through the wool as Chinese models including international star Emma Pei strutted designs from her homeland to showcase Australia's golden fleece.

The photo shoot was part of The Woolmark Company and The Campaign For Wool's partnership with China Vogue and GQ, which have dedicated recent issues to wool collections from some of China's leading designers.

Fourth-generation farmer



A Chinese model with an Aussie lamb at Carithool Station near Griffith in NSW. Picture supplied by GQ China, Vogue and Woolmark.

A \$94b market and still growing

SAMANTHA TOWNSEND
REGIONAL REPORTER



PROPERTY, coal, seafood — China has never been sheepish about snapping up Australia's best assets.

Demand from China's burgeoning middle class has resulted in the country snapping up our icons, from cheese to wool and beef.

Australian exports to China have risen to a total of \$94.654 billion in 2013 up from \$20.374 billion in 2006.

More than \$70 billion consisted of iron ore and coal exports

with one of China's leading retail company Chongqing General Trading Group. As part of the deal, Bega will supply Australian branded UHT milk over five years to the company, which has 50 per cent retail market share in food and general merchandise in the southwest

Anger brews after govt ignores advice

By ROSS TYSON

THE Gillard government has ignored the recommendations of Tony Windsor's basin plan inquiry and announced yet another round of water buybacks.

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 the government's \$3.1 billion 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 process in a 253-



page report tabled in parliament.

Among the key findings was 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 community viability".

The 12-member 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".

At the time, federal Water

Minister Tony Burke said the government had already changed to a more strategic approach and stood by the buyback program.

"The government is now considering all of the Standing Committee's finding and recommendations," Mr Burke said in a statement.

"In February, I received an interim report from the Standing Committee and in response the government moved to change tax arrangements for irrigation infrastructure grants, implemented more consistent rolling tenders for water buybacks and committed \$10 million for works to save more water for the environment.

"The government is determined that reform in the Murray-Darling Basin restores the river system to

health."

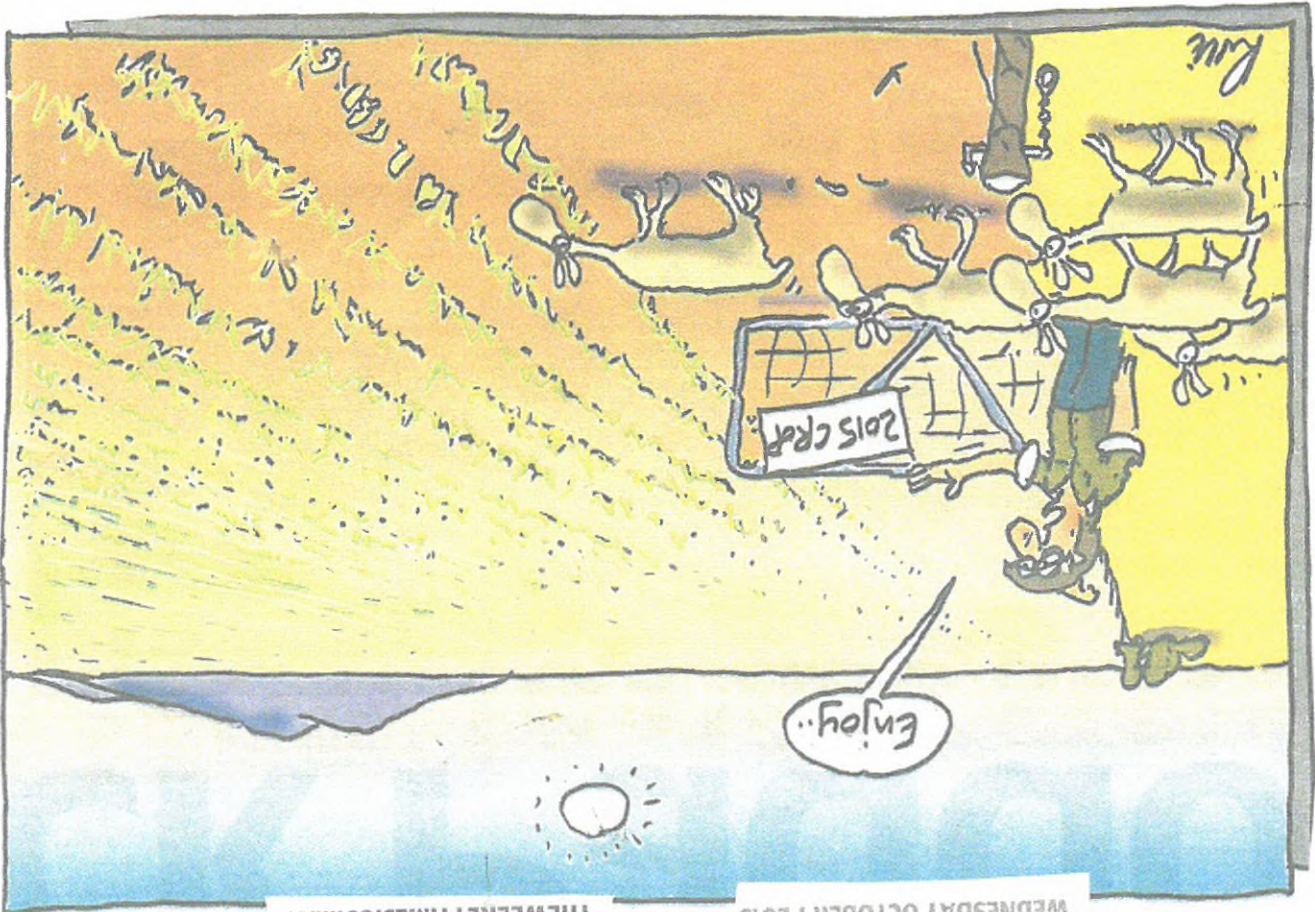
But the Griffith Business Chamber's water spokesman, Paul Pierotti, said the new round was a further example of Mr Burke saying one thing and doing another.

He said the changes made to the program — whereby the government implemented smaller but more frequent tenders — did nothing to address the core concern of water being taken from productive use without compensation for communities.

"The fact they've done this shows that they don't have regard for the affected communities," Mr Pierotti said.

"It's fine to come out and say you support the committee's findings, but where's the action?"

We are not only selling water but also our prime farm land to overseas governments.





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”.

Nothing has change irrigator are up in arms with their allocation of water. = In 1939 drought the MIA farmers were protesting in regards to their water allocation and , then floods came

Deniliquin will hold a crisis rally on Monday 26th Aug 2018 on account of water allocation 0% with Darmouth Dam is sitting at 89.8 %

2 may
2019.



Glenlyon Dam, Queensland, after the water release.
Photo by Melody Labinsky

Water flows on schedule despite rain

WATER flowing down to NSW river systems from Queensland environmental releases is so far running on schedule.

It was expected recent inland rain would have boosted flows but it's had no significant impact at this stage.

A WaterNSW spokesperson said the Queensland entitlement released from Glenlyon Dam would flow via the Dumaresq/Macintyre/Barwon Rivers and flow past Mungindi township on the Queensland-NSW border in mid-May.

Around 7.4 gigalitres of Commonwealth environmental water is being released from Glenlyon Dam

expected to continue for the next three weeks. Currently Copeton Dam levels are sitting at 11.2 per cent of capacity while Glenlyon Dam is at 10.8 per cent.

Flow in the Border Rivers reached Bonshaw weir on April 28 and was expected to arrive at Glenarbon weir late yesterday. Flow should arrive in Goondiwindi in three days' time. Meanwhile flow in the Mehi River reached Moree on April 21 and is progressing slowly downstream of Combadello weir.

As the drought continues, the change in season is taking its toll on fish in our water systems - this time bony

ANALYSIS

BY MIKE FOLEY

IT IS said crisis is the true revealer of character and that's what's happening to the water market in the current drought.

According to election-fuelled national media, our biggest worries stop at fish kills, government overspend on water buybacks and the antics of a very angry ex-Water Minister.

But what you won't hear is the human cost of decades of free market reforms (see page right).

A free-market revolution has swept across the Murray Darling Basin and its communities since economic and environmental reforms first kicked off in 1994.

On top of the current drought the three new big issues for family farms to contend with are corporate irrigators with deep pockets, less water overall for irrigation, and water trade rules that enable water entitlements to be bought and sold across catchments - allowing bulk water to move to the highest price.

All of which has driven water prices beyond the means

Reforms sell family farms down river



Giuseppe Napoli with his children, Lucie and Max at Farm 803, Leeton. A free-market revolution has swept across the Murray Darling Basin.

ulate the water markets by separating land and water titles, and freeing up trading restrictions that limited trading of entitlements between catchments.

That kicked off a chain of reforms culminating in the Murray Darling Basin Plan, which reduces irrigation consumption and releases more to the environment.

Right now, in the grip of drought, it's the first time water shortages have coincided with the post-deregulation rise of corporate irrigators.

Communities up and down the Murray Darling Basin

essentially an environmental reform, would unscramble the free market mess that has farm communities in chaos.

Rice Growers Australia president Jeremy Morton said the government's "laissez-faire" approach is delivering perverse outcomes.

"In ten years' time, if there is no irrigated dairy, or rice is back to very small levels, or even annual cropping, winter cropping, livestock are really shrunk back, we might wake up and see the whole landscape has fundamentally changed and we've lost some things we valued really

but that hasn't prevented corporate investors trading entitlement downstream to supply their new permanent plantings.

That means the market heaps more pressure on the family irrigators left in the near hundred year-old irrigation schemes located upstream, near dams.

"The government spent millions on those schemes, but the market is now pulling money out of them and using it downstream where it is less efficient to use the water," Mr Morton said.

"That is the exact opposite

Water ↑ flows on schedule

ter in mid-May.

Around 7.4 gegalitres of Commonwealth environmental water is being released from Glenlyon Dam in Queensland. It started on April 24 and will continue to mid May. A total of 3650 megalitres has been released from Glenlyon Dam in the past seven days, with a further 3750ML planned to be released in the next 12 days.

Releases from Copeton Dam started on April 16 and will continue to mid-June, with 26GL of environmental water released.

A total of 5962ML has been released from Copeton in the past 15 days with releases

As the drought continues, the change in season is taking its toll on fish in our water systems - this time bony bream are the latest casualty. A 10 degree Celsius temperature drop and rainfall of 40 millimetres in the region has been blamed for hundreds of bony bream found dead in a weir pool upstream from Bourke on the Darling River.

Bony bream are a widespread and common and are susceptible to fish kill events due to their inability to survive sudden temperature drops, which may occur at various times during the year.

- SAMANTHA TOWNSEND

reforms sell family farm down river

bulk water to move to the highest price.

All of which has driven water prices beyond the means of family farmers.

Dairy farmers are selling out in droves. Rice farmers make more money renting their water out than growing a crop. Corporate farmers are buying out family farmers at an increasing rate, and changing the cropping mix in the process.

The viability of many towns is under threat. So too the jobs in regional processing and service industries.

How did it come to this?

In 1994, Australian governments agreed to dereg-

with the post-deregulation rise of corporate irrigators.

Communities up and down the Murray Darling Basin are lashing out, demanding a fix to market failure.

The NSW election has already overturned safe Nationals seats in irrigation country, and the federal election looks like it could do the same thing again.

About 1000 people marched in Albury. They want the Basin Plan - which has become shorthand for the overall water market - to be paused so the problems can be sorted.

But it's unlikely that changing the Basin Plan,

wake up and see the whole landscape has fundamentally changed and we've lost some things we valued really highly," Mr Morton said.

"All the milk that is processed in communities in the Southern Basin - produced here and value added, Rice is the same, grown, milled and sent off to market from the local community.

"But what if we step back and say 'as a society is that what we wanted out of water reform?"

There are some limited trading restrictions on the water market, which reflect some of the physical limitations of the river system,

it downstream where it is less efficient to use the water," Mr Morton said.

"That is the exact opposite of what was thought would happen. You've already got the infrastructure close to the dam. It's more efficient and there are better soils there.

"Economic rationalist would say, no the market isn't failing, it's working. But if we are seeing the result of it 'working' then I think we have to question if this is what we as a society want.

"We've let the water market rip, but it can't be completely unregulated like that. Just look at what happened to the banking sector."



A city is born



for 100 years... Griffith

OPINION

areanews.com.au/comment

EDITORIAL

Faith was misplaced as the tide easily turns



MENTION the Murray-Darling Basin Plan around the traps and it has the ability to instantly instil fear.

Initially irrigators in the Riverina and Murray regions were concerned about their livelihoods and some have sold the farm or water licences and walked away from agriculture completely.

This week's vote by Labor and the Greens played a key role in disallowing the federal government from cutting by 70 billion litres the target amount of water that irrigators must return to the environment in the northern basin.

But what does the disallowance motion really mean?

Does it effectively kill off any future for the long-running plan?

Water trade is now on the cards in the

same way that you can buy and sell sheep and cattle, or participate in the stock market.

This is not necessarily a bad thing, but regulation is needed. It's a platform to buy and sell and opens up the commodity to be available to the highest bidder. However, what happens when the water is sold off to overseas players in the same way we are seeing foreign investment in the rural real estate space?

It has to be asked how many decisions in this industry have been made in good faith, based on the premise of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan actually coming to fruition?

The plan is now in tatters after the NSW government said it was "untenable" for the state to remain in the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

"Under my stewardship (NSW) will now start the process of withdrawing ourselves

from the plan," said Water Minister Niall Blair.

Victoria is also walking away. But what does this mean? The plan will not work without unity from the states. And how will it play out for the landholders, scientists and communities who have worked on the plan in good faith for more than a decade.

To cope with environmental flows it was known and accepted that the infrastructure had to be up to scratch. In our area there are landholders who have river country who have worn the brunt of "man-made" floods.

When the political system boils over like it has this week and decisions can be made with the stroke of a pen, it is cold comfort for those who have stuck by agriculture, worn the burden of damage, and made improvements that would ultimately support the premise of environmental flows.

2015 THEWEEKLYTIMES.COM.AU

OCTOBER 21 2015



Nothing has change in regards to allocation of water 2015

31 Aug 18 = sheep sale of 29,000 and 30 lambs sold for \$320 each from Uranquinty

31st Aug 18 = Burrinjuck Dam 40% water release 614ml = Blowering Dam 77% 5,088ml = Wyangala 57% water release 2,900ml

15,000 ml for Deniliquin farmers, price \$370 ml water has become a complicated issue

5th Sept 18 = 60GL Murray Irrigator 6% for irrigator who have paid their account entitlements

5 /9/ 18 Japan earthquake 6.7

Sat 8th Sept 18 = Dartmouth Dam 88% water release 5,300ml = Hume Dam 52% water release 11,605ml intake 12,800ml = Murray Cod fishing closed

9th Sept 18 = ABC farmers 1,000 hectare crop with no water allocation with only 5% farmer has open the gate for his sheep to feed ,, and to save 50 hectares of barley, and no income for the next 15 month.

Mon 10th Sept = Burrinjuck Dam 42% water release 456ml = Blowering Dam 75% water release 4240ml = Wyangala 56% water release 1000ml

Australia is looking at harvest of 32 million tonnes of wheat

Wheat = Victoria a train with 5 locomotives travelling with 100 wagons each contains 60 tonnes of wheat which equals 6,000 tonnes and 1.8 kilometres long, to help drought farmers in Parkes

Tue 11th Sept 18 = Burrinjuck Dam 41% water release 609ml = Blowering Dam 75% water release 4,402ml = Wyangala Dam 56% 56% water release 1,000ml

Wed 12th Sept 18 = Burrinjuck Dam 42% water release 620ml = Blowering Dam 75% water release 4,580ml = Wyangala Dam 56% water release 1,000ml

Thur 13th Sept 18 = Burrinjuck Dam 42% water release 485ml = Blowering Dam 75% water release 1,000ml

15th Sept Western Australia = earthquake 5.6 south west Walpol

Australia \$100billion Fund for the UN an unelected????????? what members fund

Labour Immigration Minister Tony Burke under his watch 50 boats came to Australia

Mon 17th Sept = Burrinjuck Dam 42% water release 455ml = Blowering Dam 74% water release 6,962ml = Wyangala Dam 56% water release 1,000ml

Mon 19th Sept = Burrinjuck Dam 42% water release 454ml = Blowering Dam 72% water release 8768ml = Wyangala Dam 55% water release 1,700ml = Hume Dam 52.5 %

Wed 20th Sept 18 = Temperature Griffith 2c 20c = Hay 5c 20c = Temora – 1c 19c

Burrinjuck Dam 42% water release 455ml = Blowering Dam 72% water release 7,970ml
Wyangala 55% water release 1,700ml

Thurs 21st Sept 18 = Burrinjuck Dam 42% water release 455ml = Blowering Dam 71% 7,501ml
Wyangala Dam 55% water release 1,700ml = Dartmouth Dam 71.9%

24th Sept 18 = ABC news reported that Aldine mine takes 12.5 million ml of water out of the river or 1.1%

21st Sept 18 = Japan volcano has erupted 44 times this week

22rd Sept 18 = Hume Dam 52.3% water release 13460ml intake 13400 ml = 23rd Sept =
Dartmouth 86.6% water release 8560ml Mitta river is running high = Blowering Dam Best dam to fish for Cod all year round = Tumut river running high = Murrumbidgee high 2.90

Mon 24th Sept 18 = Burrinjuck Dam 42% water release 455ml = Blowering Dam 69% water release 8596ml = Temperature Griffith 3c 22 = Leeton 5c 22c = Hay 4c 22c Hillston 3c 22c

Tues 25th Sept 18 = Burrinjuck Dam 42% water release 647ml = Blowering Dam 69% water release 8624ml = Wyangala 54% water release 2000ml

Wed 26th Sept 18 = Burrinjuck Dam 41% water release 617ml = Blowering Dam 8630ml =
Wyangala Dam 54% 2000ml

\$100 billion for climate change UN Paris agreement

Indonesia 7.5 Earth Quake Sulawesi centre

Thur 27th Sept 18 = Burrinjuck Dam 42% water release 717ml = Blowering Dam 68% water release 8630ml = Wyangala Dam 54% water release 2000ml

Friday 28th Sept 18 = Blowering Dam 42% water release 418ml = Blowering Dam 68% water release 8650ml = Wyangala 54% water release 2000ml

Mon 1st Oct 18 = Burrinjuck Dam 42% water release 451ml = Blowering Dam 67% water release 5160ml = Wyangala Dam 54% water release 2000

Tues 2nd Oct 18 = Burrinjuck Dam 42% water release 458ml = Blowering Dam 66% water release 5152ml = Wyangala Dam 54% 2398ml

Wed 3rd Oct 18 = Burrinjuck Dam 42% Water release 464ml = Blowering Dam 66% water release 5144ml = Wyangala Dam 53% water release 2500ml

Thurs 4th Oct 18 = Burrinjuck Dam 42% ?? Blowering Dam 65% water release 6451ml =
Wyangala 53% water release 6451ml Hillston temp 15c 23c rain 18mils

19-12-2018

Irrigators' anger boils over

By PETER HUNT

MORE than 300 Riverina and northern Victorian irrigators poured into Melbourne last Friday to demand state and federal water ministers stop draining their communities of water, food and jobs.

The group donned rain coats and brollies to march through Melbourne's drizzle, chanting and waving placards with messages to the public, media and water ministers enscorced in the Park Hyatt Hotel, that "No water = No food" and demanding they "Pause the plan" and warning the "Basin plan (is) killing community".

Berrigan Shire Mayor Matt Hannan said the ministers, who were meeting to discuss taking another 450 gigalitres out of the southern basin, had to realise it would force the closure of communities like Finley and Berrigan.

"It's pretty significant when 300 farmers come off their properties to send this message to ministers," Mr Hannan said.

Finley irrigator Alan Thwaites said it was "absolutely impossible" to recover another 450GL without the loss of more jobs in southern NSW and northern Victoria.

These southern basin irrigation communities have already been drained of 1596GL of water under the Murray Darling Basin plan, with flow-on effects to jobs, families, allied agricultural industries and towns.



Clear messages: Protesters march along Collins Street in the Melbourne CBD to the Park Hyatt hotel to protest water legislation and the Murray Darling Basin Plan. Picture: DANNIKA BONSER

PICTURE GALLERY
theweeklytimes.com.au

Caldwell irrigator Peter McDonald said the widespread impacts of losing water could even be seen in the cancellation of three school bus services in his region.

"The loss of water has meant less jobs, families and, of course, kids," Mr McDonald said.

The bus service cancellations have meant Mr McDonald and his wife have been forced in recent years to travel 900km a week to get their daughters to primary and secondary schools.

Cohuna irrigator Max Fehring said a push to recover another 450GL would simply

mean having to shut down some irrigation areas.

"The environment push is out of control, with no connection to the community impacts," Mr Fehring said. "You just can't keep taking water."

Finley irrigator Waander van Beek said draining water from the Riverina had reduced

the reliability of supply from about 85 per cent down to 55 per cent.

Mr van Beek's wife, Pam, said the district's irrigators were also angered to see their South Australian colleagues gaining 100 per cent of their allocations, while they got nothing in NSW.

Others were angered by what they see as a waste of water flowing down the Murray to fill South Australia's Lower Lakes.

Riverina winemaker Darren De Bortoli said the Basin plan was based on fraud, given it was all about forcing water down to the Coorong.

Basin irrigation communities warn their survival is at stake

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 19 2018 THEWEEKLYTIMES.

EASE OUR WATER PAIN

By PETER HUNT

STATE water ministers are seeking more Commonwealth money to ease the pain of draining a further 450 gigalitres from their Murray Darling Basin irrigation communities for the environment.

As more than 300 irrigators rallied in the rain outside a Melbourne hotel

last Friday, the state ministers were sheltering inside with Federal Water Minister David Littleproud thrashing out how to fund the 450GL.

To date \$15 billion has been locked into legislation to recover the 450GL equivalent to \$3333 a megalitre.

But the offer is viewed as grossly inadequate by the NSW and Victorian governments, given southern

basin water markets are trading high security entitlement at \$4000/ML to \$5000/ML.

Asked if he was willing to put up more money, Mr Littleproud said: "We're not afraid to look at it".

But Victorian Water Minister Lisa Neville said the Commonwealth had to invest far more to neutralise the impacts of recovering another 450GL

without adverse impacts on irrigation communities.

"I'd rather the Commonwealth put money into this, than driving communities out of agriculture," she said.

When asked to give an example of a socio-economically neutral project, she cited the \$27 million Mitiamo stock and domestic pipeline project, with the Commonwealth contribu-

ting \$14 million in return for 1000ML of water savings, equal to \$14,000/ML.

But just how much more is needed to deliver the 450GL is still unknown.

NSW Water Minister Niall Blair said: "If you want people to engage and put projects forward they need to be at the right price."

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Irrigators demand ministers ease water pain

• From Page 1

Mr Blair said the NSW Government believed the true cost of recovering water via efficiency and savings was closer to 2.5 times its market value, which would put the cost of 450GL at close to \$5 billion.

But even with more money Mr Blair said it would still be a battle to find enough projects to deliver the 450GL.

Water ministers attending the meeting did manage to thrash out a neutrality test that

HAVE YOUR SAY

Should the Govt abandon saving the extra 450GL?

theweeklytimes.com.au

Mr Littleproud said would guarantee all water recovered towards the 450GL would "create positive or neutral socio-economic outcomes".

But both NSW and Victorian irrigators attending the rally dismissed such a goal as

impossible, saying they would lose even more jobs and families from their communities if Basin governments pushed for more water.

"We just don't believe they can deliver it," Victorian Farmers Federation water council chairman Richard Anderson said.

The Federal Opposition has already made it clear delivery of the 450GL is non-negotiable.

Members of the Riverina

farmer lobby group Speak Up, who organised the Melbourne rally, warned taking more water would lead to the death of towns such as Finley and Berrigan.

"We want the ministers to listen to our concerns," Speak Up's Shelley Scoullar said.

"They are talking about the future of our homes, our jobs, our friends and neighbours. We know their bureaucratic advisers ... do not care what happens to rural Australia."

At the close of the meeting the water ministers released the criteria for water savings projects to meet the neutrality test, whereby they must:

DEMONSTRATE how they contribute to the current and future viability of proponent businesses and irrigation districts.

SUPPORT regional economies.

BE made public.

NOT have negative third-party impacts on the irrigation

system, water market or regional communities.

BE assessed for their potential to impact the price of water.

INCLUDE close engagement with community and industry leaders.

IDENTIFY improved capacity to respond to changes in business environment including drought and climate resilience.

• Basin's water torture, Page 12

MELBOURNE RALLY

Irrigators' anger boils over

By PETER HUNT

MORE than 300 Riverina and northern Victorian irrigators poured into Melbourne last Friday to demand state and federal water ministers stop draining their communities of



WEATHER WOES

Driven off by water cost

Drought rebate 'too little too late'

By PETER HUNT

HIGH water prices are forcing a new wave of northern Victorian and Riverina dairy farmers to cut back their herds and losses or face leaving the industry.

Murray Dairy reports the annual loss of dairy farmers has hit about 11-12 per cent, as allocation water prices skyrocket from \$100 a megalitre 12 months ago to \$500/ML today.

The industry had already been weakened by the impact of the April 2016 milk price clawback, but Murray Dairy chief executive Jenny Wilson said farmers were now battling to source water.

"Farmers across the Murray Dairy (GMID) region own (on average) about 60 per cent of the water they use (as entitlement)," Ms Wilson said.

It means dairy farmers must enter the high-priced allocation (temporary) water market to meet 40 per cent of their needs.

Leitchville dairy farmer John Smith said many people had to get out of dairying or cut back.

"I don't think we'll see the dairy industry at the level it has been," Mr Smith said. "Not with a third of our water being taken up by the government, while others play games on the stock market with our water."

Mr Smith has just closed down one of his dairy farms and sold its 300 milkers, after



All too hard: Farmers Scott and Bernice Lumsden with Bernice's father, John Smith, on their Leitchville farm.

Picture: ANDY ROGERS

"The sharefarmer said they were only going to lose money, because the water I supplied ran out and we had to go back into the temporary market.

"So they said to me 'we don't want to go into more

something," Mr Smith said.

Mr Smith said he would run some beef cattle on the property, plant cereal crops and irrigate "opportunistically", if and when water prices became affordable.

ter Bernice Lumsden and son-in-law Scott sharefarm, the herd has been cut back from 800 to 600 cows.

"We have to farm differently, because we're not going to sit there and cop this shit year

Victoria councillor John Keely said it was obvious \$500/ML was unaffordable. But he said dairy farmers faced enormous risks if they didn't irrigate this autumn. "I've got about 400ML left, which I'm not

By PETER HUNT

VICTORIA'S drought-affected farmers are on the cusp of gaining federal rebates of 25 per cent on the cost of drilling bores, desilting dams, as well as installing and buying tanks, pipes and pumps.

The Federal Government has set aside \$50 million to support all drought-affected farmers, with the Victorian Government still negotiating the final details on the maximum amount the state's farmers can claim.

NSW farmers have been able to access their \$12 million share of the federal scheme since January 14, after their state government signed off on its implementation and set a \$25,000 limit on the amount a farm business can claim.

Giffard farmer Steve Harrison said he would like to see Victoria mirror the NSW \$25,000 limit, but said many farmers simply didn't have the reserves to tap into a rebate.

"I was out with farmers from Briagalong, who are skint," Mr Harrison said.

"For some farmers it's too little too late."

He said what everyone wanted was municipal rate re-

6th Feb 2019 Weekly Times

Full Sailing on Lake Alexandrina on January 27.



FISH or SHIPS

By PETER HUNT

WHILE FISH DIE IN THE DARLING RIVER, BOATIES ENJOY A FULL LAKE DOWNSTREAM IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

SOUTH Australian river operators are holding back \$3.2 billion of environmental flows to the Coorong and Murray Mouth to maintain Lake Alexandrina water levels for yachting regattas and holiday makers.

Under the South Australian Government's own long-term Environmental Watering Plan, the lake is meant to be lowered to 0.4m above sea level every summer and autumn, to send a pulse of water through the barrages to the environmentally sensitive Coorong and Murray

Mouth, as well as drying out lake wetlands and expose mud flats for migratory birds.

But emails seen by *The Weekly Times* show a key member of Goolwa Regatta Yacht Club lobbied SA Government river operators on January 17 not to lower the lakes to 0.5m above sea level.

Initially SA Department for Environment and Water icon site co-ordinator Adrienne Rumbelow emailed the Coorong, Lower Lakes and

Murray Mouth Community Advisory Panel on January 16, stating: "We are releasing extra water now in line with the e-water 'flow pulse' to SA — we believe will get the best environmental outcomes now rather than later in the year."

But the following day, yacht club member and former SA Government Murray Darling Basin Initiative program leader Paul Harvey, who sits on the community

advisory panel, responded to Ms Rumbelow, stating "I would not be comfortable agreeing to a strategy which increases the risk of levels falling below 0.55m".

"It is not clear that the socio-economic impacts have been adequately considered," Mr Harvey wrote.

"We need to remember we are seeking appropriate socio-economic outcomes, as well as ecological outcomes." As of this week Lake Alex-

andrina was still being maintained at 0.57m above sea level, following the recent Goolwa Regatta Yacht Club's regatta week that culminated in the Milang Goolwa Freshwater Classic on January 27.

The depth of the lake can be as much as six metres.

When contacted by *The Weekly Times*, Mr Harvey said there needed to be an appropriate balance in managing the lakes.

"Once you get below

0.55m it's hard for irrigators to access," he said. "We're in a severe drought sequence and the risk is not being able to build the lake back to an acceptable level."

Meanwhile, the rest of the Murray Darling Basin is battling drought, water shortages, blue-green algal blooms and fish kills.

Live river data shows SA authorities have not dropped Lake Alexandrina below 0.5m since 2011, curbing flows from the 64,900ha lake into the Coorong and Murray Mouth.

Continued

2019 weekly times

Sky-high water prices force farmers to cull herds or leave the industry

Basin's dairy shutdown

THEWEEKLYTIMES.COM.AU WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 27 2019

By PETER HUNT

DAIRYING is being priced out of the Murray Darling Basin's water markets, with farmers culling into the core of their herds, drying off land or leaving the industry.

Water prices of \$500 a megalitre are almost three times what dairy farmers can afford. And even if prices fall back, industry analysts warn dairy

farmers face paying an average \$200/ML from here on.

"I don't think we can make money once it gets above \$150/ML," Invergordon dairy farmer Mark Norman said.

"Our milk price doesn't match our water price. Our farm is on the market for exactly that reason."

In 2000-01 northern Victoria and Riverina milk production was 3.3 bil-

lion litres. This season Dairy Australia estimates the region will produce little more than 1.8 billion litres.

Over the same period the number of dairy farmers in the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District has fallen from 2800 down to 1119 and in the Riverina from 250 to just 89 today.

Satellite images show a massive reduction in dairy farmers' water use over the past year.

Murray Dairy chief executive Jenny Wilson said the biggest concern was job losses, given dairying was the region's biggest employer, with 3200 people working on farms and another 8000 in milk processing and servicing the sector.

"What will replace it as the major employer in the region?" Ms Wilson asked.

United Dairyfarmers of Victoria

president Paul Mumford said Victoria's northern dairy industry was undergoing "systemic change".

"Within 50km of Cohuna local farmers are saying 20 farmers have left, exited the industry this season," Mr Mumford said.

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Dairy Farmers force out - water price too dear

on map 'hit list'

By CHANTELE FRANCIS

A WESTERN Australian pigery that activists this week broke into and brazenly broadcasted live from was on the Aussie Farms map hit list, it can be revealed.

James Warden streamed live from inside the property at Blythewood, south of Perth, early Monday morning on global activist group Direct Action Everywhere's Facebook page.

The broadcast was "hosted" by a US member who probed Mr Warden about alleged conditions in Australia.

It has been viewed more than 57,000 times.

WA Police told *The Weekly Times* they were aware of the video and will make further inquiries.

Federal Agriculture Minister David Littleproud said the incident proved the controver-

Prices force dairy out

• From Page 1

"We're extremely concerned about the whole region, given many must decide by St Patrick's Day (March 17) if they stay on. It's D-Day for them."

The most vulnerable group is young farmers, who have entered irrigated dairying with land, cows and enthusiasm, but have been unable to own water entitlements worth \$4000-\$5000 a megalitre.

Young dairying couple Rikkie-lee and Aaron Tyrrell have battled to survive their first 12 months in irrigated dairying, watching water prices rise from \$100 a megalitre when they first arrived at their Invergordon farm, to \$500/ML today.

"We went through winter with next to no rain and when water prices came up we went 'holy hell'," Ms Tyrrell said.

Ms Wilson said many young farmers were keen to

HAVE YOUR SAY

Who is to blame for dairy's northern demise?

theweeklytimes.com.au

He had one well and is happy to be described as an opportunistic irrigator, delving into the market when water was affordable and sticking to dryland cropping when prices were high.

But for those who stuck to irrigated dairying it has been a tough few years for dairy irrigators.

Many bought water in 2015-16 season for \$200 or more a megalitre on the expectation of receiving \$6 a kilogram for milk solids, and were then hit with a milk price clawback late in the season.

"They then had the wettest winter in 16 years (in 2016), which had a big impact on milk production," Ms Wilson

FEBRUARY 2018



FEBRUARY 2019



Out of the blue: Water use, as shown in blue, can be seen to have dramatically reduced around Katandra West in this 12-month February-to-February satellite image comparison.

crashed in the wake of federal

Weekly Times

Feb 27nd 2019.

SA accused of profiteering on water while parched Vic, NSW carry the cost

SOLD DOWN THE RIVER

WATER HUNT

The South Australian Government is accused of profiteering and selling up its own irrigators' 2019-20 allocations, using water set aside in Dartmouth Dam and Lake Victoria for critical human needs.

The SA Government is selling up 100 megalitres of excess water to drought-stricken NSW and Victorian communities for \$500/ML.

To hear they are selling allocation

back to NSW and Victoria because they have too much water is an absolute insult," Speak Up Campaign vice-chairman and southern Riverina dairy farmer Lachlan Marshall said.

"It's so inequitable, it's bordering on profiteering. South Australia is turning into a drain on the rest of us."

"We have dairy farmers walking out weekly, if not daily and the largest rice mill in the southern hemisphere has shed nearly 100 jobs. It's killing our communities.

"On top of all that South Australia has been caught out using its environmental water for recreation in the Lower Lakes, not to protect the Coorong or Murray Mouth."

Flow figures show just 16 per cent of the 15 million megalitres Victoria and NSW have pushed across the South Australian border this season has been allowed to pass through Lake Alexandrina's barrages to the Coorong and Murray Mouth.

Victorian and NSW irrigators say

South Australia is using its right to store water for critical human needs to prop up its irrigators' allocations, in breach of basin rules.

The SA Government has told the Murray Darling Basin Authority to hold back 308,200 megalitres in Dartmouth Dam and Lake Victoria so far this season, of which 205,600ML it claims is needed to meet Adelaide's and Murray River towns' critical needs next season.

Yet the Murray Darling Basin

Authority has confirmed NSW and Victorian governments are already locked in to supplying at least 450,000ML to meet SA's critical human water needs in 2019-20.

A spokesman for the South Australian Department of Environment denied water set aside for critical human needs was being used to prop up irrigators in 2019-20.

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04 NEWS

WEATHER WOES

SA sells basin down the river

• From Page 1

But Victorian Farmers Federation water council chairman Richard Anderson said it was "all about delivering 100 per cent (allocation) for South Australian irrigators.

"This has nothing to do with setting aside water for critical human needs."

The South Australian Government has repeatedly granted its irrigators 100 per cent allocations in March and April, while the rest of the basin's communities were left dry or waiting for months to gain a decent allocation.

Mr Marshall, who joined 50 other Southern Riverina dairy farmers at the Blighty pub on Monday to discuss their survival without an allocation, said he would feel "betrayed" if the SA Minister announced another 100 per cent allocation for the state's irrigators, when everyone else had so little.

"Our irrigators asked the South Australians, through (NSW Deputy Premier) Niall Blair, if they could put some water on the market early in the season, but they refused," Mr Marshall said.

"Now they're out taking advantage of dairy farmers, offering it at \$500 a megalitre."

Mr Marshall said he had spent \$400,000 a month over summer buying water to irrigate crops to feed his 900-cow dairy herd.

"That's \$1.2 million so far, including transaction and delivery costs," he said.

SA Water has refused to reveal just how much excess water it has sold on the allocation market recently.

But water brokers have told *The Weekly Times* SA Water is offloading parcels of excess water at hefty profit, given prices have risen from \$100/ML a year ago to \$500/ML today.

The Weekly Times has also discovered the South Australian Government has issued notices that appear to allow some irrigators to operate un-metered pumps.

In June last year SA Water Minister David Speirs issued a notice declaring "if meter readings are not used, the quantity

HAVE YOUR SAY

Should SA lose control over upstream water?

theweeklytimes.com.au

2018-19 water use year will be determined on the basis" of crop area, pump capacity or historical usage.

It adds: "Where the Minister has granted an exemption from the requirement to install a meter on a water source, the quantity of water taken will be assessed on the basis of the water allocation."

Even an SA Government fact sheet on carryover appears to accommodate un-metered irrigation pumps, stating: "If you do not have a water meter, you must contact DEW by 31 July to determine your under-use (to calculate carryover)."

An SA Department for Environment and Water spokesman said they were "not aware of any licensed SA Murray irrigators operating without meters on their pumps".

"As with all machinery and devices, water meters are occasionally prone to failure to operate," the spokesman said.

"The 'Notice' allows for water usage to be estimated where a meter has failed."

Mr Marshall implored the Federal Government and other state water ministers to stand up to the SA Government's con and take strong action to protect rural communities in Northern Victoria and Southern NSW.

Flood

By PETER SOMERVILLE

HUNDREDS of thousands of cattle have been lost in the Queensland floods.

Agforce has received requests from more than 100 producers trying to save more than 150,000 cattle.

The flooding disaster is estimated to cover an area twice

The real costs of water

What are we actually trading?

JERILDERIE 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.

"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 that either



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**

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

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.

(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

Robert Hoddle, Gunnible 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

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 Curlewis 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.



The real cost of water

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 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

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 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

was an explanation from State Water on how they derive our water allocations. We were really interested 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.

cient, 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 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."

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

and as orchard. We want to something that had a higher return per megalitre.

It seems like the citrus, 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

1st May 2019.

Weekly Times

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

THE VOICE OF THE COUNTRY SINCE 1869



MURKY WATERS

MDBA TO LOOK AT FRESHWATER CLAIMS ON SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S LOWER LAKES

By ALEX SINNOTT

AN ALTERED report that changed the course of the Murray Darling Basin Plan is set to be examined by the authority overseeing the basin blueprint.

The Murray Darling Basin Authority has declared it would look at *The Weekly Times'* revelation that three South Australian researchers altered their 2007 report to claim the state's Lake Alexandrina had been fresh for the past 7000 years.

In their influential 2009 report to

the South Australian Government, the Adelaide researchers stated: "There is no evidence in the 7000-year record of substantial marine incursions into Lake Alexandrina".

However, one of the five authors of the original 2007 paper, Federation University professor Peter Gell, condemned the changes and published a critique that has been peer-reviewed and last month published in CSIRO's *Journal of Pacific Conservation Biology*.

The MDBA this week said it would examine Prof Gell's new re-

port but added the overall plan "continues to be founded on the best available science".

"The latest contribution by Prof Gell concerning the Lower Lakes adds to the scientific literature that underpins the Basin's management," a MDBA spokeswoman said.

"The MDBA's Advisory Committee on Social, Economic and Environmental Sciences will review the paper as one line of evidence to assist with future management."

However, a defiant South Australian Water Minister, David

Speirs, claimed the 2009 research did not inform the SA Government's position on environmental water requirements for the Lower Lakes, Coorong and Murray Mouth.

"The development and implementation of the Murray Darling Basin Plan was not based on false information or a misleading premise," Mr Speirs said. "This claim is completely false. This is yet another attempt to undermine the Basin Plan. We've heard and discounted these arguments before."

Adelaide's angry rebuke has in-

flamed interstate tensions over the Basin Plan, with Victorian and NSW farmers expressing their dismay over the altered findings.

Southern Riverina Irrigators chairman Chris Brooks said *The Weekly Times'* revelation highlighted how successive state and federal governments had failed to protect primary producers on either side of the Murray.

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THEWEEKLYTIMES.COM.AU WEDNESDAY JULY 3 2019

A DOSE OF SALT

EXCLUSIVE

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN RESEARCHERS CHANGED SCIENCE BEHIND MURRAY DARLING BASIN PLAN

By **PETER HUNT**

THE science behind the Murray Darling Basin Plan is based on the work of three South Australian researchers who altered their past findings to back the claim the state's Lake Alexandrina has been fresh for the past 7000 years.

In a crucial 22-page 2009 report to the South Australian Government, the Adelaide

researchers stated: "There is no evidence in the 7000-year record of substantial marine incursions into Lake Alexandrina".

The 2009 report, which was not peer-reviewed, formed the foundation of the South Australian Government's argument the lake must be kept fresh, which was eventually enshrined as a key objective of the 2012 Murray Darling Basin Plan — to always keep salinity in the lake at less than 1500EC (seawater is about 50,000EC).

More than 174 million megalitres has been flushed down the Murray River over the past 12 months to help keep the massive 64,900ha Lake Alexandrina brimming with fresh water, frustrating many upstream irrigators.

Yet the basis for keeping

the lake fresh is based on University of Adelaide researchers Jennie Fluin, her husband John Tibby and Deborah Haynes' 2009 report, which altered their original 2007 research findings, diminishing the impact of seawater on the lake.

In their original 2007 peer-reviewed research in the journal *Hydrobiologia*, the group, along with two other scientists, examined the silica skeletons of differing algal species preserved in lake sediments, called diatoms, which indicate salinity levels over the past 7000 years.

The 2007 research concluded: "The presence of (diatom species) *Thalassiosira lacustris*, *Cyclotella striata* and *Paralia sulcata* indicate marine influence at this time.

"The change in diatom community (after 5000 years BP) is likely to represent a decrease in lake level and increased penetration of seawater, possibly associated with the variable, dry climate."

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The big dry still grips NSW. A year after compiling a graphic to show the impact of the drought, we have done an updated version highlighting how conditions in many areas have actually worsened. Crops, commodities and livestock are all under increasing pressure as farmers battle just to survive.

Western

Biggest cities/towns: Bourke, Broken Hill, Ivanhoe, Cobar, Balranald

Percent in drought: Non Drought: 0.2%, Recovering: 4.5%, Drought Affected: 77.5%, Drought: 11.8%, Intense Drought: 6.1%

Percent of NSW Total ag value: 6%

Most important commodities: 49% of NSW wine and table grapes, 16% of NSW fruit and nuts (mainly citrus), 15% of NSW sheep meat, 14% of NSW wool.

Impact: Isolated areas received good falls of rain at Easter, which has provided a welcome break from hand-feeding in some instances and has replenished

water supplies for stock and household use. Some landholders have taken on agistment in an attempt to supplement their incomes with short-lived winter pasture. Some minor flooding in parts and minor flows into river systems from both localised rain and Queensland floodwater has lifted spirits.

Rainfall: COBAR



Riverina

Biggest cities/towns: Wagga Wagga, Griffith, Narrandera, Batlow, Gundagai

Percent in drought: Non Drought: 1.1%, Recovering: 7.0%, Drought Affected: 82%, Drought: 9.3%

Percent of NSW Total ag value: 21%

Most important commodities: 28% of NSW wheat, 42% of NSW canola, 36% of NSW fruit and nuts, 20% of NSW wool, 11% of NSW beef

Impact: Parts of the eastern Riverina experienced Autumn storms and farmers managed to grow some canola and wheat, which their cattle are now grazing.

Farmers who are solely cropping will be relying on rain in July and August, which will make or break this season. Irrigation communities are staring down a tough summer crop without widespread winter rainfall. Livestock producers, particularly sheep, are experiencing good markets but the financial cost of finishing stock is high.

Rainfall: GRIFFITH



Murray

Biggest cities/towns: Albury, Moulamein, Deniliquin, Finley, Jerilderie, Holbrook

Percent in drought: Non Drought: 1.9%, Recovering: 3.2%, Drought Affected: 95.2%, Drought: 0.3%

Percent of NSW Total ag value: 11%

to be productive.

Moulamein: Drier than average. There's less winter crop than normal and those crops which were planted are suffering from frosts and a lack of water.

Deniliquin, Jerilderie, Finley, Corowa: Dry subsoil means crops will need more rain, despite decent rain in May. Cattle are being hand-fed to supplement

Central West

Biggest cities/towns: Dubbo, Forbes, Parkes

Percent in drought: Drought Affected: 38.6%, Drought: 56.6%, Intense Drought: 4.8%

Percent of NSW Total ag value: 14%

Most important commodities: 26% of NSW wheat, 13% of NSW beef, 21% of NSW wool, 21% of NSW sheep meat

Impact: Hot and dry conditions over summer and autumn have depleted soil moisture levels and winter crops have failed again. Destocking continues with some graziers now offloading their core breeding stocks. Winter crops have failed again. Morale is very low within the community as the flow-on effects hit small business and the broader community.

Coonamble: No rain since April has decimated

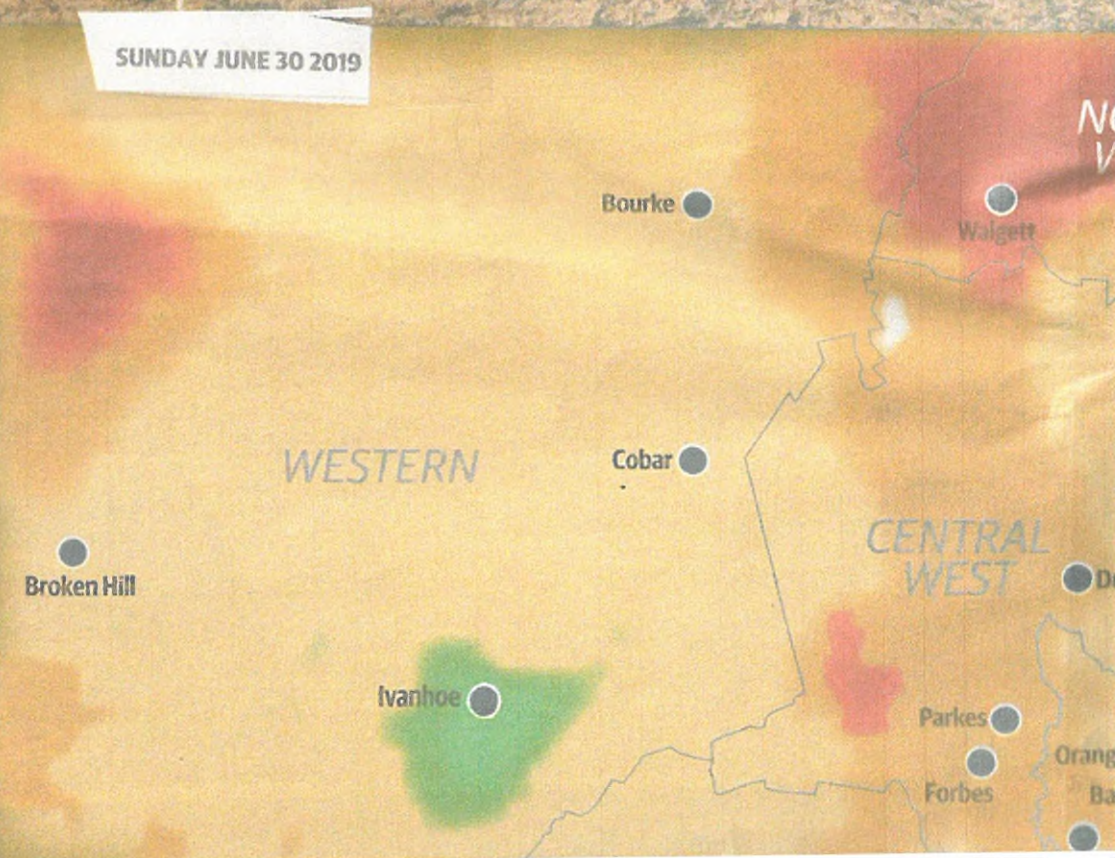
pasture, which isn't sufficient to feed the historically low number of livestock. The area sown to winter crop is significantly reduced and those crops are now struggling from a lack of water. Feed sources such as hay and grain are increasingly difficult to source and high prices are restricting ability to purchase.

Nyngan: Winter crops have failed for the third successive season and for some farmers this is the first time in 50 years they haven't planted a winter crop. There is minimal groundcover or feed for livestock. Graziers have started selling their core breeding stocks. Kangaroos are wiping out existing fodder crops.

Rainfall: PARKES



SUNDAY JUNE 30 2019



28% of NSW wool, 12% of NSW canola, 36% of NSW fruit and nuts, 20% of NSW wool, 11% of NSW beef

Impact: Parts of the eastern Riverina experienced Autumn storms and farmers managed to grow some canola and wheat, which their cattle are now grazing.



Murray

Biggest cities/towns: Albury, Moulamein, Deniliquin, Finley, Jerilderie, Holbrook

Percent in drought: Non Drought: 1.9%, Recovering: 3.2%, Drought Affected: 95.2%, Drought: 0.3%

Percent of NSW Total ag value: 11%

Most important commodities: 63% of NSW pigs, 52% of NSW rice, 27% of NSW canola, 14% of NSW wheat, 8% of NSW beef

Impact: Summer was particularly hot and dry throughout the region, with graziers hand-feeding cattle and very little irrigated pasture. Most of the region received a good autumn break but the dry soil and limited follow up rain in the west have resulted in minimal growth. Conditions in the upper Murray are average-to-good for this time of year but the rest of the region needs follow-up rain

to be productive.

Moulamein: Drier than average. There's less winter crop than normal and those crops which were planted are suffering from frosts and a lack of water.

Deniliquin, Jerilderie, Finley, Corowa: Dry subsoil means crops will need more rain, despite decent rain in May. Cattle are being hand-fed to supplement sparse pasture. Sourcing scarce feed is an ongoing issue for dairy farmers.

Albury, Holbrook: Good autumn rains have set up cropping and pasture.

Rainfall: DENILIQUN



South East

Biggest cities/towns: Goulburn, Yass, Cooma, Batemans Bay, Ulladulla

Percent in drought: Non Drought: 2.7%, Recovering: 2.5%, Drought Affected: 79.6%, Drought: 16.78%

Percent of NSW Total ag value: 5%

Most important commodities: 30% of NSW milk, 12% of NSW wool, 12% of NSW sheep meat, 8% of NSW beef

Impact: Reasonable falls of rain, both at the beginning of autumn and winter

have made for better pasture conditions compared to last year, but cold conditions and the shorter days of winter will constrain pasture growth. The Far South Coast missed out on the May and June rainfall, which coupled with the high price of feed, has increased pressure on dairy farmers.

Cooma: Colder seasonal conditions – typical of the Monaro winter – have meant poor pasture growth and required supplementary feeding of livestock. **Moss Vale:** Dry weather in April and May was disappointing after good rain in early Autumn. With the higher pasture

requirements per animal, cattle producers are carefully rationing paddock feed.

Moss Vale: Dry weather in April and May was disappointing after good rain in early Autumn.

Rainfall: BEGA



James Foster's merino sheep station 100km west of Walgett. Picture: Sam Rutty

June 2019 Big dry, drought

Opinion

THE WEEKLY TIMES

Rivulet of hope for Basin

THERE is a glimmer of hope that commonsense will be returned to the maragement of the Murray Darling Basin.

The Murray Darling Basin Authority has not only acknowledged the existence of a new credible report that has cast light on doubtful claims South Australia's Lower Lakes have been fresh for the past 7000 years, but will actually review it.

Hallelujah.

But don't hold your breath for any great changes. Any revision of the plan would have to make its way through the murky waters of vested interests and intense parochial state attitudes.

Exhibit A is South Australia's refusal to acknowledge this latest development. The SA Government says the plan "was not based on false information or a misleading premise as it has been asserted".

In effect it is saying Professor Peter Gell's revelation — peer reviewed and published by the CSIRO — that the Lower Lakes have been fresh for 7000 years is not credible.

Denial of scientific fact puts communities, primary industry in peril

Fatal freshwater fiction



The Murray Darling Basin Plan must be paused while the science is reviewed, writes **JAN BEER**

RESEARCH by eminent scientists Professor Peter Gell, A. Helfensdorfer and others have provided indisputable evidence that South Australia's Lower Lakes have always been estuarine.

The construction of barrages in the 1940s to prevent the ingress of the Southern Ocean has resulted in silt and sand accumulation to close the Murray River mouth.

Dredging the mouth has cost taxpayers more than \$100 million.

The Basin Plan objective of keeping the Murray mouth open 95 per cent of the time without dredging is a complete impossibility, regardless of how many megalitres of expensive freshwater is forced downstream.

In 2008 Prof Gell told the Federal Government that: "Prior to about the 1950s, for the six or seven thousand years in which the Coorong has been in existence, it has been strongly tidal, and in fact, quite separated from the influence of the river Murray what we need is get it right in the first place."

the river." The tragedy of the Murray Darling Basin Plan is that its entire premise is based on a falsehood that the Lower Lakes and Coorong have essentially been "freshwater" for the past 7000 years.

The Federal Government and its agency the MDBA have imposed a man-made continual drought on communities' agricultural industries on the pretence the Lower Lakes were never estuarine and had to be kept full with freshwater.

The Government has spent almost \$9 billion of taxpayers' money on a plan that is failing dismally.

We are in the throes of a drying climate cycle, experiencing less rainfall over the catchments, a change in timing of seasonal rainfall, with a 25-50 per cent decline in run-off and extremely reduced streamflows throughout the basin, with more and more pipelines being built from the Murray and Goulburn Rivers to supply towns and regions whose water supply has already run dry, or is about to.



Looming catastrophe: South Australia's Coorong and Lower Lakes.

stream inflow in the basin to supply the many proposed environmental requirements under the basin plan, sustain critical human requirements, and sustain agricultural production.

The coming irrigation season will see the crisis of water shortages evolve into an absolute catastrophe if the forecast of a dry winter and spring into summer eventuates.

The MDBA must acknowledge the best available science has determined the Lower Lakes and Coorong have always been estuarine until mankind intervened. The solution is to use the might of the Southern Ocean to allow the Lower Lakes and Coorong to receive its natural estuarine state.

far from perfect, but is also the best we're going to get". Since the plan began there has been no security of supply for irrigators or communities, with poor environmental outcomes such as bank slumping, record high fish kills, carp population explosion and an increase in hypoxic black-water events.

To continue with the current basin plan is to impose severe environmental, economic and social impacts on communities, jeopardise our national agribusiness and food security. The plan must be paused, independently reviewed and reset to achieve a true triple bottom line outcome.

Dairy Farmers force out - water price too dear--- Supermarket price of milk ??

Sky-high water prices force farmers to cull herds or leave the industry

Basin's dairy shutdown

THEWEEKLYTIMES.COM.AU WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 27 2019

By PETER HUNT

DAIRYING is being priced out of the Murray Darling Basin's water markets, with farmers culling into the core of their herds, drying off land or leaving the industry.

Water prices of \$500 a megalitre are almost three times what dairy farmers can afford. And even if prices fall back, industry analysts warn dairy

farmers face paying an average \$200/ML from here on.

"I don't think we can make money once it gets above \$150/ML," Invergordon dairy farmer Mark Norman said.

"Our milk price doesn't match our water price. Our farm is on the market for exactly that reason."

In 2000-01 northern Victoria and Riverina milk production was 3.3 bil-

lion litres. This season Dairy Australia estimates the region will produce little more than 1.8 billion litres.

Over the same period the number of dairy farmers in the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District has fallen from 2800 down to 1119 and in the Riverina from 250 to just 89 today.

Satellite images show a massive reduction in dairy farmers' water use over the past year.

Murray Dairy chief executive Jenny Wilson said the biggest concern was job losses, given dairying was the region's biggest employer, with 3200 people working on farms and another 8000 in milk processing and servicing the sector.

"What will replace it as the major employer in the region?" Ms Wilson asked.

United Dairyfarmers of Victoria

president Paul Mumford said Victoria's northern dairy industry was undergoing "systemic change".

"Within 50km of Cohuna local farmers are saying 20 farmers have left, exited the industry this season, Mr Mumford said.

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on map 'hit list'

By CHANTELE FRANCIS

A WESTERN Australian piggyery that activists this week broke into and brazenly broadcast live from was on the Aussie Farms map hit list, it can be revealed.

James Warden streamed live from inside the property at Blythwood, south of Perth, early Monday morning on global activist group Direct Action Everywhere's Facebook page.

The broadcast was "hosted" by a US member who probed Mr Warden about alleged conditions in Australia.

It has been viewed more than 57,000 times.

WA Police told *The Weekly Times* they were aware of the video and will make further inquiries.

Federal Agriculture Minister David Littleproud said the incident proved the controver-

Prices force dairy out

• From Page 1

"We're extremely concerned about the whole region, given many must decide by St Patrick's Day (March 17) if they stay on. It's D-Day for them."

The most vulnerable group is young farmers, who have entered irrigated dairying with land, cows and enthusiasm, but have been unable to own water entitlements worth \$4000-\$5000 a megalitre.

Young dairying couple Rikkie-lee and Aaron Tyrrell have battled to survive their first 12 months in irrigated dairying, watching water prices rise from \$100 a megalitre when they first arrived at their Invergordon farm, to \$500/ML today.

"We went through winter with next to no rain and when water prices came up we went 'holy hell'," Ms Tyrrell said.

Ms Wilson said many young farmers were keen to

HAVE YOUR SAY

Who is to blame for dairy's northern demise?

theweeklytimes.com.au

He had one well and is happy to be described as an opportunistic irrigator, delving into the market when water was affordable and sticking to dryland cropping when prices were high.

But for those who stuck to irrigated dairying it has been a tough few years for dairy irrigators.

Many bought water in 2015-16 season for \$200 or more a megalitre on the expectation of receiving \$6 a kilogram for milk solids, and were then hit with a milk price clawback late in the season.

"They then had the wettest winter in 16 years (in 2016), which had a big impact on milk production," Ms Wilson

FEBRUARY 2018



FEBRUARY 2019



Out of the blue: Water use, as shown in blue, can be seen to have dramatically reduced around Katandra West in this 12-month February-to-February satellite image comparison.

crashed in the wake of federal

THE PAGES OF

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 \$3.15 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 its portfolio of rural water infrastructure.

MARKET PLAYERS

NSW Murray allocation water trade in megalitres

2018-19 TOTAL TRADE = 557,069ML		
WATER ACCESS LICENCES OWNED BY	TRADED ONTO	TRADED OFF
DUXTON		
WAL 39825	41,745ML	19,130ML
WAL 41663 & 41664	14,259ML	6430ML
WAL 41750 & 41828	6806ML	4115ML
TOTAL	62,810ML	29,675ML
16.6% of trade	92,485ML	
RURALCO		
WAL 5744	5350ML	5350ML
SKYE BELLAMY		
SKYE BELLAMY WAL 37142	778ML	65ML

2019-20 TOTAL TRADE = 171,837ML YTD		
WATER ACCESS LICENCES OWNED BY	TRADED ONTO	TRADED OFF
DUXTON		
WAL 39825	19,720ML	5123ML
WAL 41663	4877ML	130ML
WAL 41664	219ML	0
WAL 41828	0	2762ML
TOTAL	24,816ML	8015ML
19.1% of trade	32,831ML	
RURALCO 2019-20		
WAL 5744	24,769ML	2726ML
16% of trade	27,495ML	
SKYE BELLAMY		
SKYE BELLAMY WAL 37142	15,869ML	2578ML
10.7% of trade	18,447ML	

Source: NSW Water Register

permanent 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 rural water infrastructure.

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 Alistair 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 the market."

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 would be a significant

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.

Dams under scrutiny

BY JACINTA DICKINS, JESSICA WHITTY

MEMBER for Murray Helen Dalton says she can't begrudge farmers taking advantage of efficiency programs to build private dams in the Griffith area.

However, she does believe the governments on all levels need to have more transparency and accountability when it comes to the construction of these private dams.

It was revealed this week in a report from *The Australia Institute* that 20 to 30 dams have been built on private property in recent years, with the help of taxpayer funds.

According to this report at least 10 of these new dams are located between Griffith and Hay.

"There are several private dams being built around Griffith with the help of taxpayers money," Mrs Dalton said.

"I can't blame farmers for accessing the government's farm efficiency program, but where is the transparency and accountability from government?"



QUESTIONS: Helen Dalton wants answers on private dams.

"The federal government has spent \$4 billion of our money on this program, but can't answer basic questions like how many dams have been built.

"Why isn't the government spending money on dams for public use?"

The federal agriculture department has claimed new dams collecting recycle

irrigation water or replacing shallower dams could help save water, but the institute says three dams it has reviewed do no such thing. Water Minister David Littleproud has publicly lamented the fact very few new dams have been built since 2003.

There's no doubting dams could be part of a solution into ensuring better water

security going into the future, but Mrs Dalton remains concerned private dams for "big corporates" were doing more harm than good. She said if the government was investing in this type of infrastructure it could afford to assist towns running out of water.

"Griffith volunteers are carting water to dry towns out

west and they don't even get the fuel paid for by government," Mrs Dalton said. "But big corporates get taxpayers money for private dams. When (state) parliament sits next week, I'll be asking the water minister to explain this government's warped priorities on water and unveil the secrecy on taxpayer funding for private dams."

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.



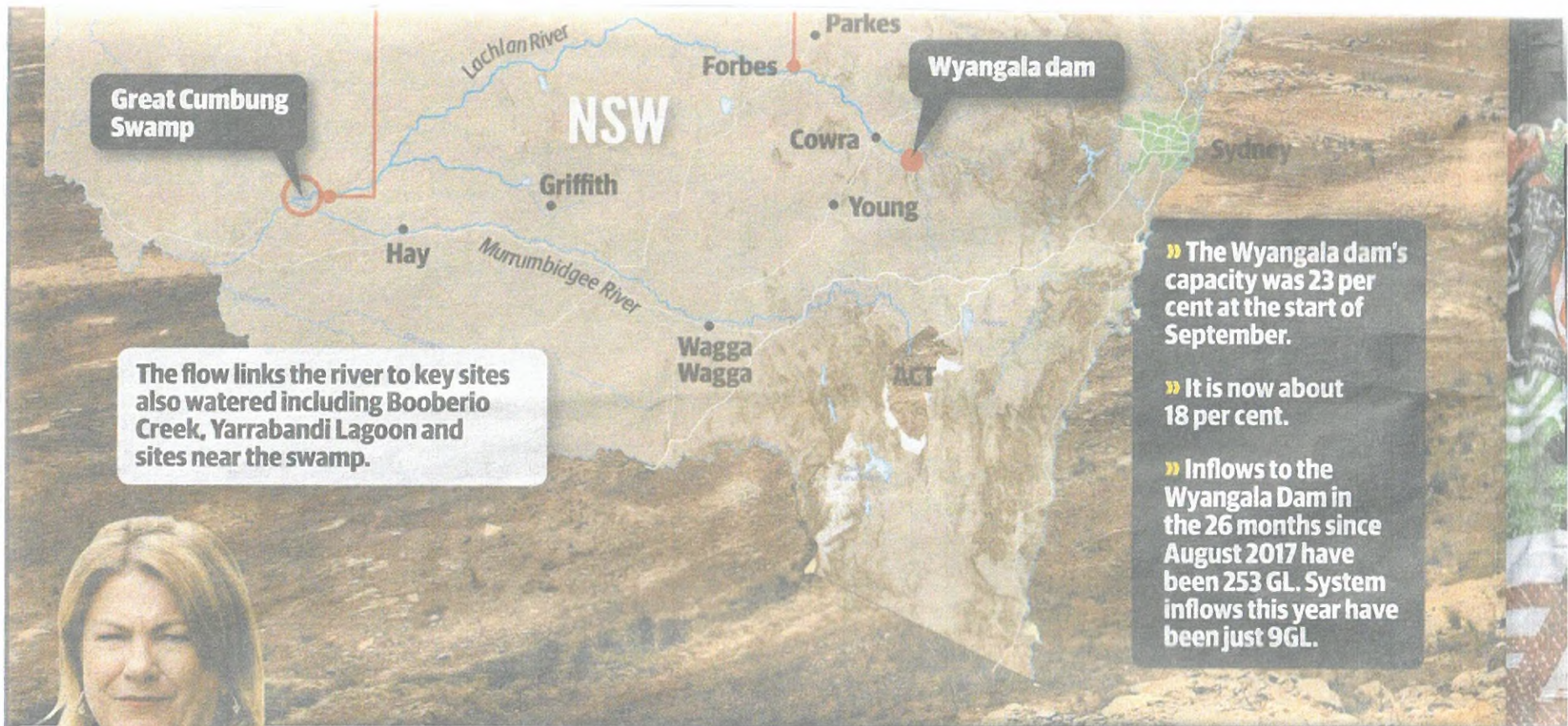
Great Cumbung Swamp

Wyangala dam

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

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

» It is now about 18 per cent.



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 over a year.

The CEWH — an independent Commonwealth agency charged with irrigating river streams — told the state body Water NSW to release the 22 gegalitres 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 southwest. 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

» 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.



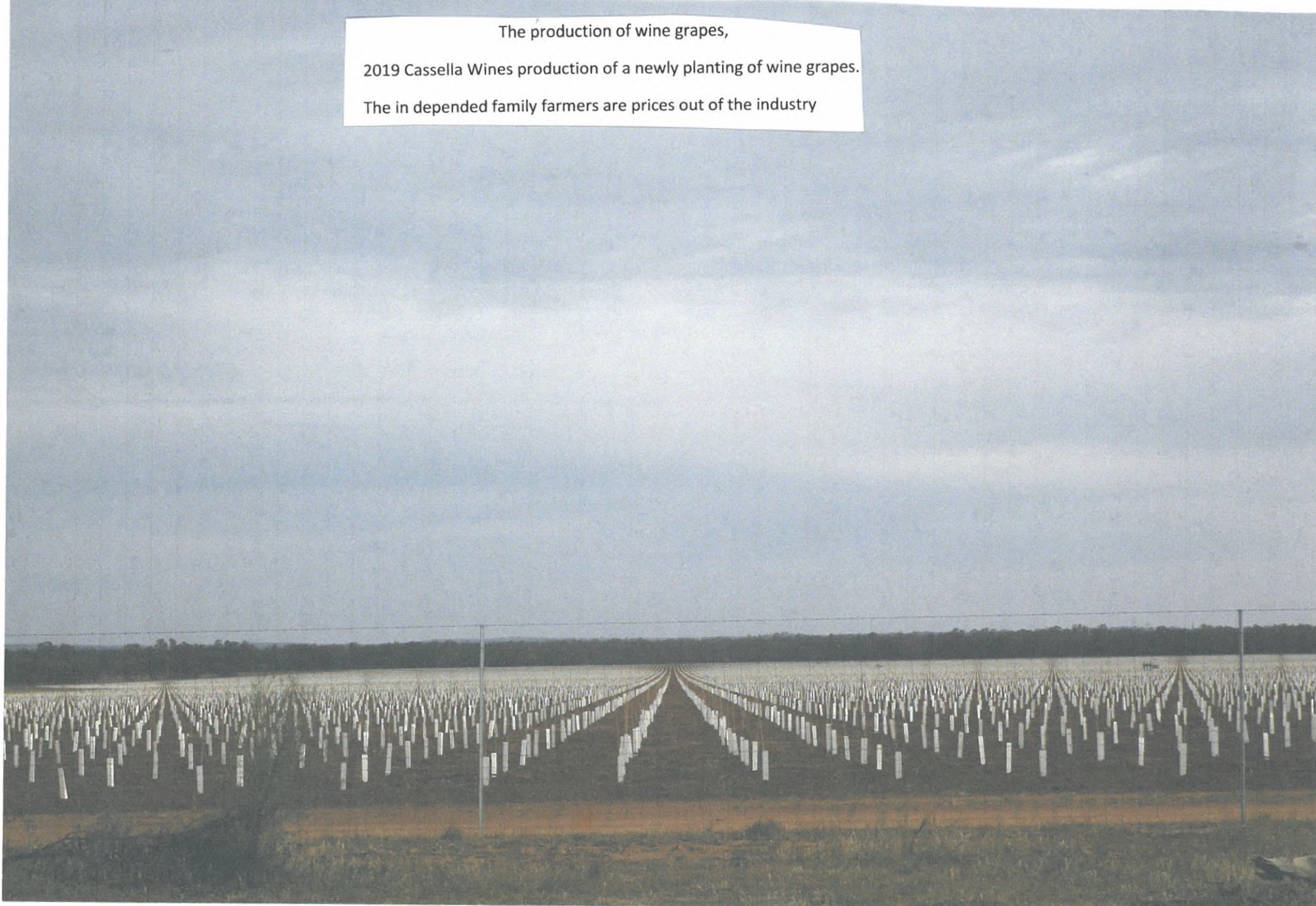
Have your say at the

who do you believe? History
Weekly Times = 3-7-19

The production of wine grapes,

2019 Cassella Wines production of a newly planting of wine grapes.

The in depended family farmers are prices out of the industry



Murray Darling Basin Plan ?

STOP – stripping water from production!

STOP – inflating water prices!

STOP – smashing regional economies!

STOP – impacting remaining farmers !



START – environmental accountability!

START – compensating damaged economies!

