

Southern Murray Darling Basin irrigators are floodplain harvesting

It's not just northern NSW and Queensland cotton growers who are harvesting their flood plains, it's also happening in the Southern Murray Darling Basin.



Uncertain times: NSW Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Helen Dalton has been a vocal critic of unlicensed floodplain harvesting in the north of her state. Picture Yuri Kouzmin

SOUTHERN Riverina Irrigators' [challenge to the legality](#) of unlicensed floodplain harvesting is set to undermine the practice in their own back yards, even creating uncertainty for the local state member for Murray, Helen Dalton.

Murrumbidgee chief executive Brett Jones said if SRI was successful in its bid to have floodplain harvesting declared illegal, it would have ramifications for everyone, not just those in northern NSW.

"There's harvesting going on all over the state," Mr Jones said. "I'm sure it affects all of us."

Mr Jones gave the example of the Mirrool Creek floodplain, where he said Murrumbidgee Irrigation was seeing "a lot less water coming into our system".

Satellite imagery shows landholders, including Shooters, Fishers and Farmers MP Helen Dalton, have constructed levees and large storage dams on their properties, which sit on the Mirrool Creek floodplain.

An infra-red satellite image from September 2016 highlights floodwater spilling on to the Mirrool Ck floodplain and flowing through the centre of Ms Dalton's farm, past a major dam on her property.



NSW state MP Helen Dalton's property, showing just one major dam in November 28, 2015.



The floods on NSW state Member for Murray Helen Dalton's property.

Other images show Ms Dalton and her husband Nayce, who is chairman of Murrumbidgee Irrigation, started clearing one of their blocks in September 2017 and raising the height of levees in preparation for construction of a second dam on the property.



NSW state member Helen Dalton's property after work began on clearing for new dam.

By December 2018 a Google earth image shows a 785-megalitre dam has been constructed on the new site.



NSW state MP Helen Dalton's property after a new 785ML dam was constructed.

Asked if the new dam on her farm would capture water flowing across the Mirrool Creek floodplain, Ms Dalton said “it gets back to what you define as floodplain water.

“I can't put my hand to my heart and say it (the dam) wouldn't harvest Mirrool Creek water, when we've got a metre of water across the place.”

She said “I'd be the first in line for a licence if I needed one”.

Ms Dalton has been a vocal critic of unlicensed floodplain harvesting in the northern Murray Darling Basin, stating on social media recently: “my party SFF believe all water take should be licenced and metered”.

But she said her 785ML “recycling dam (was) for supplementary or excess water – that is, water which is not needed for irrigation or environmental purposes downstream.

“The dam carries over this excess water not used during a season and stores it for use the following season.

“Every single aspect of my farm conforms 100 per cent to all relevant laws and regulations.”

The NSW Water Register shows the works approval for the 785ML dam states it must only be used for:

THE capturing, containment and recirculation of used water from irrigation lands; and

WATER taken by other authorised water supply works.

Ms Dalton recently told irrigators she had attended a meeting with Murray Darling Basin Authority chief executive Phillip Glyde, who had reassured her “all floodplain harvesting works constructed after 3 July 2008 would need to be decommissioned.

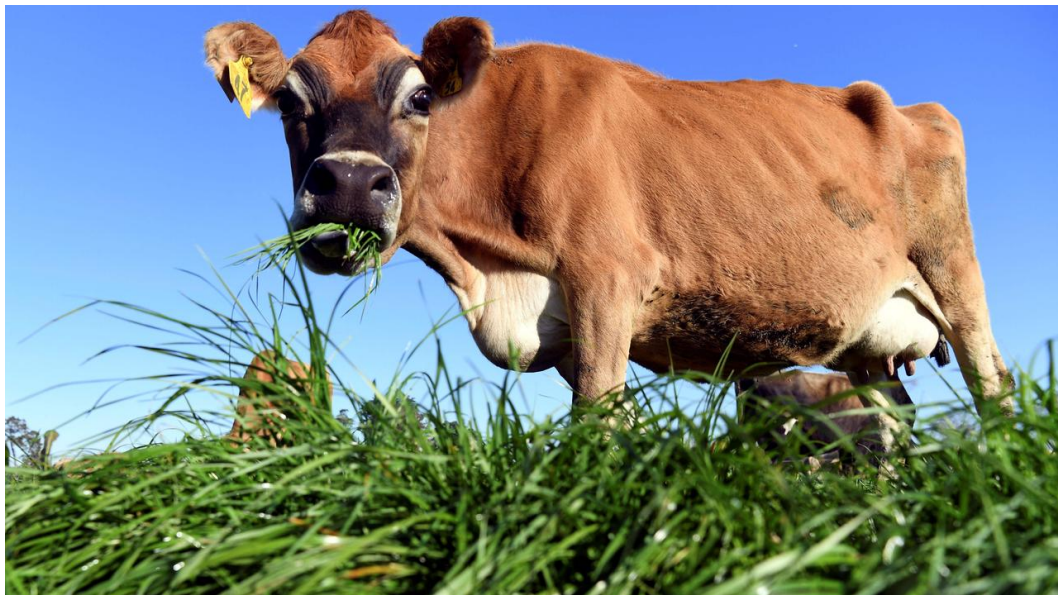
She said he used the phrase “punch a hole in them”.

SRI chairman Chris Brooks has repeatedly stated “our evidence is floodplain harvesting is unlicensed” and the group was preparing to take the matter to court.

MORE

[THE NSW GOVERNMENT IS TRYING TO CUT A DEAL ON FLOODPLAIN HARVESTING](#)

[More related stories](#)



[Dairy](#)

[Fonterra steps up farmgate figure for New Zealand suppliers](#)

New Zealand suppliers of Fonterra have received some welcome news from the Auckland-based processor — but it’s still the farmgate status quo for Australian farmers.

[Read more](#)



[Lifestyle](#)

[Top tales of survival in the bush](#)

The miraculous discovery of missing man Robert Weber is just the latest tale of survival in the bush in Australia. These are some of the most famous and heartwarming from our history.
[Read more](#)