



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

SELECT COMMITTEE ON FLOODPLAIN HARVESTING

MEDIA RELEASE

Upper House Inquiry's Final Report Critical of Government's Attempts to License Floodplain Harvesting in New South Wales

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

15 December 2021

The Legislative Council select committee established to examine floodplain harvesting in New South Wales has published its final [report](#) today.

The Upper House committee included members of the government, opposition and crossbench and held four hearings to inquire into the practice of floodplain harvesting in New South Wales, including the practice's legality; the water regulations that were gazetted on 30 April 2021; as well as how floodplain harvesting can be licensed, regulated, metered and monitored so that it is sustainable and meets the objectives of the *Water Management Act 2000* and the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

The final report makes 25 recommendations and 14 findings about the need to reduce and manage floodplain harvesting at environmentally sustainable levels and the changes that must be implemented before the NSW Government embeds the practice through a licensing framework.

"The inquiry revealed that there continues to be deep divisions between water users, between basins, between experts and between communities on the merits of floodplain harvesting", said Ms Cate Faehrmann MLC, Chair of the Select Committee.

"The committee also heard convincing evidence that the amount of licences the Water Minister intends to hand out is likely to exceed legislated limits set under the Murray Darling Basin Plan. Meanwhile, growth in private storages has increased, yet there has been no proper assessment of the impacts caused by flood works built to capture rain and floods.

"Most importantly, the committee heard that legislated Cap and sustainable diversion limits must be adhered to, meaning there must be considerable winding back of a practice which has grown in line with the massively increased capacity for storing water taken from the floodplain or overbank flows.

"Therefore, changes need to be made in relation to measurement, illegal floodplain harvesting structures, water accounting rules and aspects of licence design.

"The inquiry was also informed of deficiencies in terms of community engagement and transparency. In particular, stakeholders who are non-irrigators – including First Nations representatives and environmental groups – felt they have had very little say in the direction of the NSW Floodplain Harvesting Policy. The communities' resultant lack of faith in the process is part of the reason why we are recommending that a new, independent expert panel coordinated by the Natural Resources Commission is established.



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Ms Faehrmann concluded: "The vigour and passion with which stakeholders expressed their views ultimately reflects just how important the Murray-Darling Basin is to the environment, First Nations peoples, industries, as well as the health and wellbeing of communities across the basin. That is why I urge the NSW Government to carefully consider the findings and recommendations of this report".

A copy of the report and its recommendations, along with the evidence gathered during the inquiry can be found on the committee's [website](#).

-ENDS-

*For further information please contact Ben Cronly, office of Committee Chair, Ms Cate Faehrmann MLC,
on 0487 247 960.*