

**INQUIRY INTO IMPACT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE WATER MANAGEMENT (GENERAL) AMENDMENT
(EXEMPTIONS FOR FLOODPLAIN HARVESTING)
REGULATION 2020**

Organisation: Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations

Date Received: 29 May 2020

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What is your view on the way the Water Management (General) Amendment (Exemptions for Floodplain Harvesting) Regulation 2020 was implemented?

The amendment was put in place and implemented purely to benefit one water user group (irrigators) to the detriment of all other river communities, the environment, towns and in particular First Nations. The implementation was secretive. Our organisation, a peak body representing First Nations across the Sth Murray Darling Basin, was never informed of it. We understand that the amendment was implemented cynically and opportunistically to allow irrigators in the Northern Basin to access flows that had returned to the Barwon-Darling system after nearly two years of no-flows.

What is your view on the impact of the Water Management (General) Amendment (Exemptions for Floodplain Harvesting) Regulation 2020?

By exempting what would have been illegal water take, this amendment has allowed for significant extractions of water from a critically stressed river system that was experiencing its first meaningful flows for years. This extraction has contributed to undermining cultural outcomes downstream on the Baaka. Downstream communities have been deprived of the benefit of these life-giving flows. Barkandji people were dismayed by the series of decisions, enabled by this amendment, that allowed irrigators to extract flows, up to hundreds of gegalitres, which could have produced a desperately needed flow event that filled Menindee Lakes and provided real water to the Lower Darling. The impact of these decisions has been profound: on the environment and on people's wellbeing, mental health and connection to Country.