

INQUIRY INTO FLOODPLAIN HARVESTING

Organisation: Name suppressed

Date Received: 13 August 2021

Partially
Confidential

To The Select Committee on Floodplain Harvesting,

On Behalf of the Moira Private Irrigation District members we, the Board of Directors, would like to provide a submission into your Floodplain Harvesting inquiry.

Moira Private Irrigation District is situated between Deniliquin and Moama and features a diverse range of primary production of both dryland and irrigation. The district is situated in the Murray River Council LGA and boasts highly productive and fertile soils operating with an efficient and sustainable irrigation supply. MPID consists of 94 Irrigation farms and 60 Stock and Domestic properties covering approximately 50,000 Hectares and holds several Water Access Licenses to the volume of 36,000 Megalitres. The area consists of mixed farming enterprises including Feedlots, Grazing, Winter and Summer Cropping, Dairy, Horticulture, Viticulture and other Permanent Plantings.

We believe the current arrangements with Floodplain Harvesting in the northern basin have the potential to reduce flows into the upper Darling and Barwon River systems therefor creating a shortfall of water reaching the storage at Menindee and leads to less water available for the lower Darling and Murray. Any reduction in floodplain flows causes a severe reduction of storage volumes throughout the entire Murray Darling Basin. A reduction in volume available at Menindee automatically means any water requirements below Wentworth must be provided by upper Murray storages leaving New South Wales Murray Irrigators with less resources. In the previous years where Menindee has been unable to supply downstream demands, NSW Murray irrigators have had endure low availability and over inflated temporary water prices making it unaffordable for our members thus losing our drought mitigation plans. This was highlighted in 2019 when the federal government implemented the Water for Fodder program showing just how important water was to provide fodder for drought starved stock. We all know the importance of water during extremely long periods of drought and efficient and effective management of the water resources leading into these droughts is imperative.

A lack of available water resources in Menindee has seen a dramatic effect in the Murray upstream of Wentworth. High demand has led to high volumes flowing at high velocity through this area creating major erosion of riverbanks leading to trees falling into the river creating more constraints and turbulence. MPID extracts its water via pumps situated at the lower end of the Barmah Choke and we have witnessed the destruction of this fragile area first hand. Another concern we have is the amount of conveyance water needed to supply downstream of Wentworth from the upper Murray catchment. There doesn't seem to be any clear measurement or accounting of this conveyance component, particularly when the water flows over the bank into the surrounding wetlands and forest.

MPID would advocate that metering and monitoring of all flows, whether it is floodplain or within the river systems, be installed thus creating equality between all catchment areas. MPID supplies water to its members via pumps and we have compliant Australian Standard meters installed and

monitored by Water NSW. WE expect that all other water users throughout the entire Murray Darling system to operate under the same extraction and usage conditions. The Southern Basin has undergone extensive metering installation under government direction whereas the Northern Basin has not. We realise the Northern NSW and Queensland has recently been under extreme drought which naturally leads to lower inflows but when the rain eventually returns, we need to know precisely what the volumes are and where they are going. This would allay any concerns and misconceptions that currently arise.

MPID Board of Directors hopes this inquiry will lead to a more balanced approach with regard to measurement and management of all water within the entire Murray Darling Basin.

Kind Regards

Moir Private Irrigation District Board of Directors.