

INQUIRY INTO FLOODPLAIN HARVESTING

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NSW Legislative Council
Select Committee, Parliament House, Macquarie St Sydney 2000
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Re: Inquiry into NSW Government's management of Floodplain Harvesting

Dear Chair,

As a member of the general public I welcome this inquiry into floodplain management in NSW. The failure of NSW government to implement an effective floodplain management policy over the past decade would appear a deliberate policy approach that is mainly in the interests of northern basin irrigators.

This apparent policy failure needs to be examined outside the shadows of political deals so that the broader community can understand one of the critical reasons why our inland rivers are in ecological crisis and downstream communities are missing out on reliable access to a vital resource.

NSW made a commitment to implement the Murray Darling Basin Plan. The sustainable management of floodplain waters within various water sharing plans is a critical component of this commitment. However, NSW WSPs languish unassessed, out of date and continue to facilitate over extraction of a precious resource; most Water Resource plans have been withdrawn a.k.a rejected as inadequate.

NSW government must explain why there have been various iterations of floodplain policy since 2010 policy and whether this is to avoid implementation of floodplain management consistent with NSW's MDBP commitments.

Further, with a changing climate it is negligent to wait for the next drought to achieve sustainable and transparent management of floodplain waters. Information gaps are no excuse for government inaction: ignorance is usually not an excuse under any laws.

Responsible, sensible government must recognise information gaps and apply the precautionary principle in water management decision-making consistent with water laws and sound management response to the impacts of a changing climate.

I look forward to the results of your inquiry.

Sadly I expect the usual rhetoric and evasion-to-answer that the public is getting used to from a series of Water Ministers who are placed under inquiry. Possibly we will see the covid pandemic woven into the reasons for government delay and inaction on this important matter: maybe if there was genuine government interest in really listening to "the science", NSW wouldn't be in both the "covid mess" and the floodplain political quagmire!

Yours sincerely
Cathy Merchant