

INQUIRY INTO FLOODPLAIN HARVESTING

Organisation: Name suppressed

Date Received: 13 August 2021

Partially
Confidential

SUBMISSION TO LC FLOODPLAIN HARVESTING INQUIRY

is a multi-generational family farming operation that irrigates a variety of winter and summer crops with water supplied by the Trangie Nevertire Irrigation Scheme in the Macquarie Valley.

As irrigators who don't floodplain harvest, we find the current situation inequitable. We have followed the rules but there is a group of irrigators out there who, through no fault of their own, don't have rules to follow. That is a failure of government.

I am not a lawyer, but if floodplain harvesting was illegal as some people claim, why isn't NRAR prosecuting irrigators? Why then has the Minister reducing supplementary water? Why is it represented in the Murray Darling Ministerial Cap on diversion?

Clearly, there is evidence to support it as a historical form of take and we do not have an issue with it. It is an important source of water for some, available during times of plenty, when it floods.

Our farms are located outside the designated Macquarie river floodplain, so we do not harvest water from the floodplain. But because of the way the Water Management Act is written, by continuing to operate my farm as I have historically, I can be called a floodplain harvester when we capture rainfall runoff off our irrigation fields.

We are required by the conditions on the irrigation Works Approvals for our farms not to allow runoff water from within our irrigation development to leave the farm. We must store this water on farm to the best of our ability, in fact the Clean Water Act and the EPA require us to retain the first 50mm of rainfall runoff on farm.

The rainfall runoff exemption regulation meant that we could continue to operate our farms as designed for best practice, to meet these largely environmental obligations without the need to be a floodplain harvester.

The rainfall runoff exemption regulation clearly enabled us to continue that historical practice without the need for excessive regulation or cost. The rainfall runoff regulation would have provided us the ongoing certainty around how to operate our farm without impacting legal limits, as it's a small volume of water which is quite often mixed with irrigation tailwater when storms occur during irrigation cycles.

We support that all major water take for irrigation should be licensed, metered, and reported to Government and our community. This obviously must include floodplain harvesting where it occurs, but should exclude exempt rainfall runoff generated by land-formed irrigation fields.

It's a logical and simple solution, license, limit and meter floodplain harvesting, so other water users with supplementary licences aren't impacted in the meantime.

It is about time the floodplain regulations are enacted to give irrigators the certainty they require. Thank you for considering our submission.