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SA Water Minister Ian Hunter Admits to 'Strong Language' at Basin Meeting but Refuses to Step Down' *ABC News* (online, 21 November 2016 <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-11-21/sa-water-minister-ian-hunter-refuses-to-step-down/8041292>>

SA Water Minister Ian Hunter admits to 'strong language' at basin meeting but refuses to step down

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South Australian Water Minister Ian Hunter has refused to resign from his portfolio despite admitting he used "inappropriate language" aimed at his Victorian and federal counterparts.

The expletive-laden rant against Victorian Water Minister Lisa Neville and Acting Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce occurred at an Adelaide restaurant on Thursday night.

Mr Hunter was in Whyalla yesterday for a country Cabinet meeting, where he apologised for the foul language.

"It's true to say that I used some rather strong language on Thursday night and I am sorry about that but I'm not sorry about standing up for South Australia," Mr Hunter said.

At the meeting, environmental flow requirements in the Murray-Darling Basin Plan were being discussed and it was alleged Mr Hunter said "f*** you" to Ms Neville and called her a "c****" before storming out of the restaurant.

"I did use very strong language in terms of telling the Deputy Prime Minister that his intentions not to deliver on the Murray-Darling Basin Plan would not stand and I told him where he could go and, as I say, I am indeed sorry about that.

"It was inappropriate but I felt very strongly at the time."

South Australian senator Anne Ruston, who was at the dinner, has made a formal complaint to Premier Jay Weatherill about Mr Hunter's behaviour.

Mr Weatherill said he had counselled Mr Hunter.

Victorian Water Minister Lisa Neville said the encounter was fiery and robust.

"It certainly got quite fiery at times, as I indicated to Ian Hunter the next day that I thought he had overstepped the mark," she told 774 ABC Melbourne.

She said Mr Hunter was "forceful".

"It was not intimidating in that it did not, in any way, make me change my position around what we needed to advocate, protect river communities."

SA to launch round two of Fight for the Murray

Mr Weatherill today issued an ultimatum for Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull to recommit to the Basin Plan or face "round two" of its Fight for the Murray campaign.

The State Government fought a long campaign to get the [Basin Plan across the line between all relevant states back in 2012](#).

"In the long term what we'll have is a healthy river. We won't have dying wetlands," Mr Weatherill said.

"I mean, just as we won the original agreement through the original agreement and building a coalition of support across the state and the nation, we'll do so again if they choose to walk away from this agreement."

When the plan was brokered by former federal water minister Tony Burke, up to 450 gigalitres was offered in addition to the 2,750 gigalitres promised, provided it could be returned without negative social or economic outcomes for Basin communities.

Water Minister Barnaby Joyce now believes returning the extra 450 gigalitres to the environment could cause harm to some communities, a position that has raised the SA Government's ire.

'Can't have serious conversation with people like that'

Mr Joyce told 891 ABC Adelaide Mr Weatherill had to carefully consider his response to Mr Hunter's behaviour.

"The question Mr Weatherill and everybody has to answer is this: If you don't like it [caustic comments] in the US presidential elections, if you say that this is completely outrageous then what are you going to do when one of your own fellas do it?" he said.

"Or are you just going to sit back and make an excuse for it? Because if you do people just think you are a hypocrite and the relationship just doesn't work.

"If I carried on like that on your radio station I would be without a job this afternoon."

Mr Joyce would not confirm the comments made.

"I'm a good old boy from the country, so I don't think you should — this sounds very, very sexist, but I do not believe you should talk like that around women. I think it is very unbecoming and you are not in the locker room now," he said.

He said discussions about the basin plan continued for an hour and a half after Mr Hunter stormed out of the restaurant.

Mr Joyce said a contentious issue in the plan for an extra 450 gigalitres for environmental flows for South Australia by 2024 needed addressing.

He said a clause in the plan meant water would not be taken away from irrigation communities if they would be left economically worse off.