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SA Water Minister Ian Hunter in foul-mouthed tirade at fellow politicians including Acting Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce

Natalie Kotsios and Tony Shepherd, *The Advertiser*
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SOUTH Australian Water Minister Ian Hunter told his interstate counterparts and Acting Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce to “f--k off” during an abusive and foul-mouthed spray at an Adelaide restaurant last night.

Tensions overflowed at a dinner at popular Leigh St restaurant Rigoni’s Bistro last night.

Sources have revealed Mr Hunter told his fellow ministers to “f--k off” and then stormed out with his staff to get ice-cream.

The [extraordinary tirade directed towards Victorian Water Minister Lisa Neville](#) and Mr Joyce occurred during a dinner meeting in Adelaide of the Murray Darling Basin ministerial council.

The minister’s angry tirade then continued outside, with Mr Hunter telling department staff to also “f--k off” before demanding his staff also leave the meeting.

A spokesman for Mr Hunter denied reports that he had called Ms Neville a “c--t” during the rant.

Mr Hunter and his team were later spotted outside eating ice-creams.

Mr Hunter, Mr Joyce, federal Assistant Water Minister Anne Ruston, Ms Neville, and the ACT’s representative were meeting over dinner to discuss the basin plan when Mr Hunter unleashed the tirade.

Mr Joyce said he would not reveal details of Mr Hunter’s outburst but was “disappointed when people scream at me”.

He said “what was in the room will stay in the room” but called on Mr Hunter to apologise to some of those involved.

“It’s quite obvious you can’t go through a room full of staff screaming at them,” he said.

Contacted this morning about his outburst, Mr Hunter directed all calls to his office before hanging up.

Asked if Mr Hunter had unleashed a string of expletives including towards Ms Neville, his office did not deny it had occurred but described the exchange as “private”.

At a later press conference, Mr Hunter later declined to comment on his actions or what was said but described it as a “distraction”.

“I’m not going to talk about what I might have said in a private meeting, that’s not what I do,” he said.

“But I would say I will stand up for South Australia at every opportunity. I will fight for the water that’s been promised to South Australia.

“I’m very pleased to be standing up for my state and I will do so in the most forthright manner.”

Attendees at today’s meeting claim that Ms Neville alluded to the ugly incident in the meeting when she said that abusing each other was not a productive way forward.

Mr Hunter and Mr Joyce are at loggerheads over the faltering plan to return 450GL to the Murray Darling.

Earlier today, Mr Hunter called for Mr Joyce to be sacked and his portfolio handed to South

Australian Senator Anne Ruston.

“I’m outraged that NSW and Victoria have decided that they don’t want to deliver the plan because it’s too difficult for them,” he said.

“I’m even further outraged that the Federal Government is going to let them get away with it. South Australia will be standing up for the river even if Barnaby Joyce won’t be.”

But Mr Hunter now faces calls for his own sacking.

Member for Chaffey Tim Whetstone — who has a long history of advocating for the Murray — said the Federal Government policy wouldn't change because of Mr Hunter but his actions could jeopardise future negotiations.

“It's been reported to me that the foul language he's used against the (acting) Prime Minister and other ministers, if this is the way a Water Minister is going to behave on a national platform; (it means) he's prepared to play petty politics and jeopardise SA,” he said.

Deputy Opposition Leader Vickie Chapman said Premier Jay Weatherill should act if Mr Hunter didn't immediately explain his “undignified” behaviour.

“We really must have an answer because the whole of the state's security and its negotiations with the Commonwealth and other states will continue to be at risk,” she said.

“On important issues like our water security it is imperative that our ministers conduct themselves in a dignified and appropriate manner so that they may be able to negotiate and maintain the best interests of the state.”

-with AAP