

Bill Johnson's summary of the Namoi Water Northern Basin Review FOI Docs

A quick summary;

Set 1: file attached

This set deals mostly with preparations for the August 9th 2016 meeting between MDBA, the Northern Irrigators, and Water NSW to discuss the Coordinated flows proposal. There's a lot of chaff in it and I have only attached the notes from the meeting. Discussions were almost exclusively with the Macquarie, Namoi, Gwydir and Border Rivers Executive Officers as well as Michael Murray and Ian Cole. Mal Peters is cc'd in one email that I saw, and John Clements and Michelle Ramsay got emails and went to the meeting.

Daren Barma was there consulting for the irrigators.

This set contains extensive discussions between MDBA and the irrigators about deliverability, and discussions with Macquarie River Food and Fibre. I have only included document 48, the notes of the meeting.

Documents 10, 17-20, 23, 35,36,39-42 and 44 are of some interest.

This is an example of extensive and close collaboration with MDBA and Water NSW provided to the irrigation industry but not to any other stakeholders.

Set 2: no file attached

A lot of communication between MDBA and irrigation industry reps.

Set 3: file attached

This file contains all of the documents in Set 3. They are emails between Phil Townsend and the Northern Irrigators discussing the economic figures and model.

The Warren information in the table below was pulled together from document 96 which I haven't included but which has similar data for all the other towns. About half the towns had higher employment in 2013 than 2001. There was a general decline between 2001 and about 2008/9, which then picked up after 2009. More than half the towns had higher employment in 2013 than 2008/9.

I don't understand how Phil interpreted it. I don't know that anyone other than the Northern Irrigators had access to the data and the models to this extent.

Set 4: file attached

Exchange between Daren Barma and MDBA requesting reports after he was engaged to do a review of the hydrology modelling for the Northern Basin Review for the Northern Irrigators. The reports were provided.

Set 5: no file attached

Internal MDBA emails discussing a response to Jon-Maree Baker about the Wee Waa video. Also a completely redacted email to Phillip, presumably from Matt Coulton.

Set 6: file attached

Communications between MDBA, NSW DPI Water and Namoi Water. A proposal from Namoi water dated 8th November, offering that Namoi Water and the NSW government would support the 320 GL proposal with 20 GL from the Namoi if MDBA agreed to changes to the Water Sharing Plan and supported an increase in the payment for water under the infrastructure fund and 100% government funding. DPI Water and the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture are in the emails, and were part of at least two discussions mentioned.

The final document is a letter from Phillip Glyde to Namoi Water, copying in Gavin Hanlon (NSW DPI Water) and Paul Morris (DAWR).

Comment

The key difference in MDBA's approach to the irrigation industry compared to its approach to other stakeholders is that the irrigation industry was treated as a collaborative partner by MDBA and state governments, working on hydrological and economic modelling, the toolkit and deals about support for the 320 GL. Irrigators seem to have been involved in devising the recommendation. They certainly had a great deal of information that other stakeholders did not have. Other stakeholders were not involved at this level, and some communities, especially downstream of Bourke were not included at all.