

Manaois, Julianne (MDBRC)

From: CL O'Connor <phillip.oconnor6@bigpond.com>
Sent: Tuesday, 1 May 2018 7:31 PM
To: General Manager
Subject: Fwd: Thank you for meeting with us in Brewarrina [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

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From: Phillip Glyde <Phillip.Glyde@mdba.gov.au>
Date: 10 May 2016 at 4:52:34 pm AEST
To: Phillip Glyde <Phillip.Glyde@mdba.gov.au>
Cc: Rachel Clarke <Rachel.Clarke@mdba.gov.au>, Frank Walker <Frank.Walker@mdba.gov.au>, Bill Johnson <Bill.Johnson@mdba.gov.au>
Subject: Thank you for meeting with us in Brewarrina [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Good morning

On behalf of my fellow Authority member, Prof Barry Hart, and my other Murray–Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) colleagues Rachel Clarke, Bill Johnson and Frank Walker, I would like to thank you all for the opportunity to meet on April 21 and discuss the work that we are doing in the Northern Basin, and for sharing your time to help us better understand the issues and concerns that you have. It was great to have people from along the different rivers represented as well - I appreciated hearing the different views, and it helped my understanding of how the various pieces of the Northern Basin puzzle fit together. The key concerns, and possible courses of action that we heard are summarised as follows:

- Low flows in the river are very important to graziers and others living on the floodplain and these flows need to be protected.
- The changes to conditions of use made by NSW Government to A-Class irrigation licenses has led to a reduction in these low flows.
- Concerns about how NSW managed the moratorium they placed and then lifted during last year, with Bourke being placed on restrictions soon after its lifting.
- Protection of environmental water will be important – public environmental water should be for the benefit of everyone.
- Metering, monitoring and accountability for water users is important in making sure water arrives where it should. There was a reported allegation that pumping conditions had been breached but the final outcome is unknown.
- A water recovery target of 415GL is preferred as this should allow more water to reach the bottom of the system. Upstream development has had a big impact on towns, communities and stock and domestic users and that cost has not been recognised.
- It was also noted that the cost of treating town water goes up especially if the river keeps experiencing low flows of short duration due to poor water quality.
- Concerns on the Lower Bogan regarding their annual environment, stock and domestic delivered from the Macquarie system being interfered with and small local flows being intercepted.
- The total volume set aside in the Lower Balonne for environment, stock and domestic flows needs changing to achieve flows through to the end of the system. The currently daily pass flow of 730 ML/day is not adequate.

In terms of actions that you think need to be taken to remedy the situation ('silver bullets', to use Barry's term) you mentioned the following were important:

- The system needs enough flushes of water to improve water quality. Councils should be asked how their water treatment costs vary with the flow conditions
- NSW needs to reverse the changes made to A-class licenses in 2012 to:
 - return to the 6 inch (or 150ml) pump rule
 - disallow aggregation of A-Class licenses so are used to meet the original intent to be used on small blocks
- In general we need more water
- Something should be done about sleeper licenses to ensure there isn't a future drain on the system
- Supported the Northern Basin Advisory Committee idea of a 'toolkit' with the proviso that they should be adapted for each valley.
- More accountability through an independent panel or community board when decisions are being made on whether or not water should be embargoed to allow it to flow through the system and not be pumped for irrigation.
- Better monitoring and reporting of water use

While we can't promise to deliver the above solutions to the issues you raised, it is important context for us to consider and will help inform any future conversations we have with the state governments as we move towards a recommendation on what the water recovery target for the Northern Basin should be and what other suggestions or conditions could be included with the recommendation.

As mentioned in the meeting, we are currently finalising the environmental science, hydrology modelling, and social and economic research. We will be providing opportunities for people to have further input and ask more questions about this research through some workshops we will be running over the coming months. We are very keen to keep in contact with you and make sure that you have the opportunity to understand and provide feedback on this research before a recommendation is made to Minister Joyce later this year, so for those who were not able to make it this time there will be further opportunities to meet.

Once again, I would like to thank you for giving up your time to meet with us and for being so candid and helpful in explaining the various water management issues as you see them. If you have any further questions, or would like to add any additional points to the above, please feel free to get in touch— Rachel, Frank and Bill's details are provided below. We have stored your email address in our contact list so we can continue to keep you involved and up to date on the Northern Basin Review and other Basin Plan issues that you might be interested in. MDBA will not disclose your contact information to anyone else unless required to by law, but please contact us at any time if you would like us to update or remove your details from our system.

You can also keep in touch with us through our new online engagement space where we discuss the work we are doing in the Northern Basin at: getinvolved.mdba.gov.au/nbr.

Regards

Phillip

Phillip Glyde

Chief Executive



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