

Friday, 24 January 2020

Southern Riverina hosts two water inquiries over two days

This week, Deniliquin hosted two key representatives who are conducting separate reviews into Australia's water and irrigation arrangements, giving input into their respective reviews which will be submitted to the Federal Minister for Water this year.

Murray Irrigation's Chairman, Phil Snowden, said the company welcomed visits from Merran Kelsall, a representative working with two other panellists to review the feasibility of returning a further 450GL of water to the environment.

Also visiting was Mick Keelty, the Interim Inspector General of Murray-Darling Basin Resources who is conducting an inquiry into the management of Murray-Darling Basin water resources.

"This was a fantastic opportunity to voice the concerns of our region and ensure our views are heard at the federal level.

"We were very clear in our contribution to each review. Specifically, that we believe it's not feasible to return another 450GL of water to the environment. During the visit, we took the opportunity to demonstrate how greater environmental outcomes can be achieved using existing environmental water, without the need to recover more," he said.

Phil said that he was pleased with the attendance at the Interim Inspector General, Mick Keelty's, Town Hall meeting held on Thursday, 23 January 2020, but was concerned that the various reviews and inquiries were being conducted in isolation.

"There needs to be a holistic view of the many issues facing the Murray-Darling Basin to ensure there is a full understanding of the significant community, farmer and emotional impacts on local regions.

"Our region provides breakfast, lunch and dinner for this country and for people all around the world. While we still believe there's a strong future in food production, we need to make sure our industry is protected and supported for future farming generations.

"One of the key regional issues is that General Security licences are being seriously impacted by the focus on meeting downstream needs.

"We're feeling the pain of this approach. And even though the government never intentionally decided to prioritise certain crop types over others, this is what is currently happening.

"It's vital that water sharing arrangements and regulations are consistent and fair across all states and users. NSW is currently at a disadvantage, which can't continue. It's placing the livelihoods of our farmers and regional towns in jeopardy.

"Murray Irrigation supports the numerous reviews and enquiries, and strongly encourages governments to support the Interim Inspector General so he can undertake constructive, transparent work that benefits all communities," Phil concluded.

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