



admin@southernriverinairrigators.com.au
PO Box 1254 Deniliquin NSW 2710
www.southernriverinairrigators.com.au

Peak body representing 2200 landholdings, annually producing \$6 billion in agricultural product and supporting 25,000 jobs in the Murray Valley.

Wednesday 7 April 2021

Letter from Chair Chris Brooks re voluntary levy of \$300 per landholding

It is no secret SRI have been working hard in the fight to return water back to the Riverina despite the National Party and government bodies, including NSWDPiE and the MDBA, continually selling our region short. NSW Murray general security allocation reliability has reduced from 84 per cent to 48 over the last two decades including two consecutive years of zero allocation.

In 2021, in a 'normal' year, we are sitting on a 50 per cent allocation and this is the best we can get?

We deserve access to every single drop of water we pay for as licensed and metered irrigators.

Water Minister Melinda Pavey is proposing to license floodplain harvesters in the north with licenses of 390GL plus 500 per cent carry over by June 30 2021.

If this licensing goes ahead both Victoria and NSW stand to lose 721,000 ML (close to the entire water footprint of MIL) FOREVER.

This water will be gifted to a select few corporate cotton farmers in the north who have already had access to 27-years of free water while southern basin communities have been sacrificed time and time again.

We are fighting this process tooth and nail and have engaged the legal services of Tim Horne and combined with work carried out by Slattery and Johnson, we have proven FPH is illegal under Basin Law and we have uncovered data which proved beyond reasonable doubt storages in the north have increased two and a half times above the legal, legislated 1994 cap levels

We uncovered NSW Water have no intention of implementing an end of system flow target for the Darling River which comes at a great cost to the southern basin and we face the very real risk of zero allocation and expensive water becoming our new reality.

Irrigation in our region underpins a \$7 billion agricultural industry and 24000 jobs and we are worth fighting for – for our families, for our communities, our environment and our future.

No government has ever had the right to make changes that so negatively impact one region just to favour their constituents in another, and collectively we must fight to retain our sovereign rights, like we have never fought before.

As you will be aware, we hosted a series of meetings in February across the LHAs to garner support for a \$300 'voluntary levy' per landholding which was well supported by 99 per cent of those in attendance, to help fund the urgent political, legal and media challenges we face.

SRI remain hard at work lobbying government with accurate data and legal advice which is paid for by the collection of your membership levies, however we are aware of a small group of unelected, self-appointed National Party supporters (many of whom have been previously removed from stakeholder positions including SRI, BIC, MIL and dairy committees) doing their best to undermine and misrepresent the work we are doing. While I make it my business to not get involved in petty politics, it has come to my attention they are questioning the financial integrity of SRI.

An article by Weekly Times journalist Peter Hunt attempting to discredit SRI is a recent example.

The story itself was inaccurate stating we haven't had our 2018-19 financials completed. Our financials have been lodged with the ATO within the prescribed period, but the form to NSW Office of Fair Trading was delayed because of a change of public officer and subsequent signature required.

Attempting to financially discredit SRI to try and restrict our funding is a direct insult to each and every single one of you - our hardworking farming families.

I would also like to remind all shareholders our financials are independently audited and are available at any time to members – please contact your LHA. I would also like to reiterate SRI are a small, dedicated team, many of whom receive very little or no remuneration for the work they do. The Chair, Vice Chair and LHAs generously donate the majority of their time and are driven by a desire to return water to our region for the betterment of us all – socially, economically and environmentally.

What is happening to our region is illegal and is in breach of the Basin Plan and the Water Management Act and united, we must fight to expose this injustice.

FPH is just one issue and while it is the most urgent, there are many more lined up right behind.

The last few years have been tough and have shown without water our community, our industry, our environment and our next generation simply have no future at all.

Chris Brooks
Barooga Park
Seppelts road Barooga NSW
0419 505 404