

Southern Riverina Delegation meets with Ministers in Sydney

Representatives from NSW Murray farming organisations have taken important messages to Sydney.

The delegation led by Murray Irrigation with support from Member for Albury Justin Clancy, is seeking NSW Government support to strengthen the region's economy through improved water management.

It involved several Murray Irrigation representatives including chair Steve Fawns, plus Southern Riverina Irrigators (SRI) deputy chair Darcy Hare and Murray Regional Strategy Group (MRSG) chair Geoff Moar.

Meetings were conducted over two days last Wednesday and Thursday with NSW Coalition Government personnel including Minister for Lands and Water Kevin Anderson, and Minister for Regional Roads and Transport Sam Faraway. There were also discussions with Acting Premier Paul Toole, and Minister for Environment and Heritage James Griffin.

Other political representatives who also met with the delegation included Shadow Minister for Regional NSW and Shadow Minister for Agriculture Mick Veitch, Shadow Minister for Water Rose Jackson, Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party members Robert Borsak and Mark Banasiak, as well as Independent Member for Murray Helen Dalton.

Additional to meeting with politicians were discussions with the National Irrigators Council, Snowy Hydro Ltd, and senior personnel from the Office of the Deputy Premier, and NSW Department of Planning and Environment.

Mr Fawns said he believed it was the first time the major Southern Riverina farming organisations had combined to present a united message to decision-makers in the NSW Government.

"Thanks to the efforts of many people, we have enjoyed two successful days that I am confident will have a positive impact across the Murray Irrigation footprint," Mr Fawns said.

"We were able to discuss unique issues and challenges that we have faced due to changing water policy and management over the past 20 years, and

Media Release

28 March 2022



Murray Irrigation

importantly we presented solutions that we believe can enable more water to be allocated for productive use, while at the same time ensuring the environment is further enhanced. This, after all, should be key to making the most effective use of our water resource.”

The four main points which formed the basis of the discussions included:

- Murray Reconnected Floodplains – The Murray Valley is at significant risk of further water recovery by NSW not achieving its full Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism (SDLAM) projects by June 30, 2024. Murray Irrigation has a robust environmental project called ‘Murray Reconnected Floodplains’ that has broad stakeholder support. Murray Irrigation seeks support to amend Basin Plan legislation to recognise new projects, along with funding, to support on-ground works that focus on environmental outcomes.
- Public bridges – In 1995 when Murray Irrigation was privatised it inherited around \$1 billion of infrastructure and delivered about 1,200 gigalitres annually. Today it averages half this volume, largely due to the impacts of government water reform, yet the infrastructure remains the same, including maintenance of 500 public bridges. Murray Irrigation seeks support to secure \$140 million in funding to fix these structures.
- Better utilisation of Snowy Hydro System – There appears to be underutilised storage in the Snowy System where it could be used to conserve more water in wet years for use in dry years to underpin staple food production and economic growth. Murray Irrigation seeks support to explore all initiatives to conserve more water in the Snowy System in wet periods so that it can be used in dry periods.
- Wet Year Allocation Policy – Farmers, communities and industries across the Murray Valley have struggled in dry years when there are very low or zero water allocations. In wet years there are opportunities to be able to grow more crops to recover from drought, have little to no third-party impacts from extra water use and a great opportunity to implement additional targeted environmental initiatives to rehabilitate natural riparian ecosystems. Murray Irrigation seeks support to amend the Murray-Lower Darling Water Sharing Plan to enable these opportunities to be realised in wet years.

Media Release

28 March 2022



Mr Fawns said dialogue over the two days was constructive and Murray Irrigation, on behalf of landholders, hopes there will be positive outcomes for the region.

“We are seeking funding for projects and policy changes that supports our farmers and communities, while at the same time enhancing environmental outcomes,” he said.

He thanked SRI and MRSG for their support, which delivered a united message on behalf of our region.



Southern Riverina Delegation with Snowy Hydro representatives and Member for Albury Justin Clancy



Pictured at the social dinner on Wednesday evening in Parliament House were Acting Premier Paul Toole with Murray Irrigation Chair Steve Fawns and president of the legislative council of NSW Matthew Mason-Cox