



March 2018 e-newsletter

Update from National Irrigators Council and NSW Irrigators Council Meetings

The main issue at both National Irrigators Council (NIC) and NSW Irrigators Council (NSWIC) recent meetings was the consequences of the Greens disallowance motion on the Northern Basin Review (*Review*) Amendment which was recently passed in the Senate.

The 2017 *Review* found that Northern Basin communities were at breaking point as a result of water buybacks and that there are more effective and less damaging ways to deliver environmental outcomes.

THE *Review* recommended that the Basin Plan Northern Basin recovery target be reduced by 70 GL and that a suite of measures, dubbed “toolkit measures”, could deliver equivalent environmental outcomes. It was estimated that this would save 180 jobs in communities of the Northern Basin.

MDB Chief Executive Phillip Glyde said the MDBA's *Review*, which was slated at the beginning of the plan, was based on the best available peer reviewed science and evidence and involved an extensive and comprehensive review process which took place over four years.

The impact of this motion has ramifications for us in the south, The Greens have already announced their intention to disallow the Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism (SDLAM) amendments, which will be considered by parliament in May. This amendment would see the southern recovery target be reduced by 605 GL.

It is fortunate that there is still another opportunity to pass the *Review* amendment, however the SDL amendment does not have the same luxury, so must pass and if it fails there will be mechanisms such as buyback to the tune of around 1 million megalitres of general security equivalent required to meet the 2,750 GL target. NIC and NSWIC will be lobbying hard on this issue to ensure the passage of the SDL adjustment amendments.

The SDLAM is something that we in the Murrumbidgee need to pass the Senate or our businesses and communities will be in grave danger. There are a number of projects in the SDLAM that may have impacts on certain areas, however these impacts can and should be mitigated against and if so the result would much better for irrigators and irrigation communities than the alternative.

Metering Compliance and fallout of 4 Corners

The second big issue relates to the fallout over the 4 Corners Story from July 2017 surrounding allegations of water theft in the north and perceived lack of compliance of irrigators in NSW.

For a quick summary recap, the 4 Corners story led to Ken Matthew's Independent investigation into NSW water management and compliance. One of the recommendations from the Matthews report was the creation of an independent and more effective water regulator.

In late 2017 Niall Blair, the NSW Minister for Regional Water and Primary Industries, announced the creation of the new NSW Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) and the consolidation within it of all compliance and water regulation enforcement functions, previously split between WaterNSW and NSW Department of Primary Industries—Water (now under NSW Department of Industry- DoI).

In what is seen as a knee jerk reaction to all of this, DoI Water recently sent out letters to licence holders concerning their Licence Conditions and Works Approvals, stating amongst other things that they must have metering equipment that complies with Australian Standard AS4747. This is of great concern as very few meters are actually compliant.

It has been reported that a number of these letters contain errors. If you have any issues, questions or concerns regarding the DoI Water Conditions letter please contact Water NSW. The contact options are:

- ring 1300 662 077 press 7. You will be diverted to Water NSW team where they can submit a submission through an operator
- contact www.watarnsw.com.au/conditions to submit a submission directly
- send an email (Customer.Helpdesk@watarnsw.com.au) or letter to WaterNSW with your submission (WaterNSW, PO Box 398, Parramatta NSW 2124).

NSWIC has formed a Measurement and Metering Working Group to guide the department and ensure a practical process and policy is developed. The working group has met with Departmental senior managers including Acting Executive Director Water, Charlie Dowsett, and the Executive Director of the Water Form Implementation Taskforce, Emma Solomon. Discussions focussed on the significant compliance obstacles to irrigators achieving the AS4747 standard in the immediate future across the 24 WSP zones in which the Standard is included as an absolute.

Where we stand in the Bidgee with State owned meters in relation to the AS4747 issue is as yet unclear, a number of the meters are AS4747 compliant, however there are installations that are not compliant.

A [Fact Sheet](#) has been released by the Department covering Works Approvals and the Licence provisions stating the need for current compliance with the AS4747 metering standard. An assurance contained in the Fact Sheet states that NRAR will not be pursuing any audit or policing activities in regard to AS4747 meter compliance in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless NSWIC will continue to progress with discussions on the best route for transition to AS4747 meter, and keep a close watching brief on this issue on behalf of the irrigation sector.

NSW Water Reform Action Plan

Further to this whole debacle the NSW Government has developed a [Water Reform Action Plan](#) which is supposed to ensure an equitable and transparent approach to the management of water for future generations.

There are a round of consultation meetings on the water Reform Action plan and the associated consultation papers on:

- [Water take measurement and metering](#)
- [Transparency measures](#)
- [Better management of environmental water](#)
- [Floodplain harvesting policy.](#)

The Griffith consultation session will be held on 6 April 2018 from 1pm–3.30pm at the Griffith Ex-Servicemen's Club 6/12 Jondaryan Ave, feel free to attend. MPII will be making a submission on the consultation papers on which we would value your input, please forward any items to Iva (ivaquarisa@gmail.com) as soon as possible as the timeline on the submissions is very tight with a closing date of 15ht of April 2018.

Under the **Water Act 2007 (Cth)**, the Productivity Commission is required to undertake five-yearly assessments of the effectiveness of the implementation of the Basin Plan and water resource plans.

The Productivity Commission released an issues paper on March 13, relating to the first Five Year Assessment of the MBD Plan. There will be a public forum in Griffith on Friday April 13. You can click [here](#) to register to attend and download the 44 page issues paper [here](#). Initial submissions are due **Thursday 19 April 2018** and can be made [online](#).

Some good news

Are you interested in switching to solar powered irrigation systems? If so new [checklists](#) for anyone seeking quotes for solar powered irrigation systems (both grid-connected and diesel integrated) are now available. Visit www.aginnovators.org.au

NIC has received Commonwealth funding under the “Leadership in Agricultural Industries fund” for members to participate in training programs with the Australian Institute of Company Directors, Australian Rural Leadership Foundation and Peter Cullen Trust. NIC are now seeking expressions of interest for anyone interested in undertaking training in any of these areas. Click on the links below

[Expression of interest form \(word download\)](#)

[Background information for participants and sponsoring member organisations](#) an



Macquarie River Weir Fish Passage at Dubbo, visited as part of the February NIC meeting.