

Thank you for agreeing to receive our monthly update. We appreciate you taking the time to keep abreast of what NSWIC is doing to represent Water Access License holders in NSW. This electronic bulletin is a collation of our weekly updates which are sent to our Member organisations.

If you would like more details about your local Member of NSWIC, please don't hesitate to contact us.

### Water Act Review Roundtable

Mark McKenzie and Stefanie travelled to Melbourne on Thursday 21 August to attend the Water Act Review Roundtable.

The meeting involved many from the irrigation community and provided us with the opportunity to speak to our issues on the review. A Briefing Note prepared of this meeting with the key arguments and submission points from stakeholders, regulators and the respective Basin Governments [HERE](#) was of great assistance in concentrating our approach to this meeting.

The discussions were constructive and the panel appeared to listen and take stakeholder's recommendations on board. We will continue to watch this process closely over the coming months.

### Murray-Darling Basin Issues

#### **MDBA Clarifies Trade through the Barmah Choke**

Following from the MDBA's announcement that trade through the Barmah Choke will continue on its assessment of seasonal conditions, storage levels and water demand, NSWIC asked the Authority for clarification on its modelling, and what circumstances would prompt the Authority to terminate trade of water upstream and downstream of Barmah. MDBA CEO Rhondda Dickson's advice on the decision on the Choke is detailed below:

*"The decision to continue relaxation of trade of water from above the Barmah Choke to downstream of the Choke follows consideration of the operating scenarios identified in the River Murray Annual Operating Plan. The Annual Operating Plan is currently being finalised for publication and is expected to be available on the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) website in the next two weeks.*

*In preparing the Annual Operating Plan, the MDBA takes account of:*

- *expected water use by irrigators and environmental water users;*
- *availability of water in inter-valley trade accounts (Goulburn and Murrumbidgee); and*
- *availability of water in Lake Victoria and Menindee Lakes.*

*Historically, there has only been one incidence of restrictions being imposed as a consequence of Choke capacity; in 2003 for a period of up to about 10 days. The volume involved was of the order of 10 GL. In early 2007, there was a period of about 10 weeks in which restrictions were avoided but only with co-operation of irrigators in managing their consumption as well as use of inter-valley trade accounts drawing on water held in weir pools delaying inflows into Kow Swamp and use of Mulwala Canal.*

*Hydrological modelling undertaken by SKM to support a comprehensive study of the Barmah Choke published in 2009 identified seven years in 112 years of historic records in which restrictions could be necessary based on historical climate. Based on experience between 2000 and 2010, potential restrictions do not occur in years of extreme, prolonged drought as water availability is generally low and, accordingly, so is demand.*

*The characteristics of the 2003 period of restriction and the 2007 period that was close to restrictions are:*

- *dry years with no water availability from Menindee;*
- *low water availability in inter-valley trade accounts;*
- *dry years with very low tributary inflows from Goulburn and Murrumbidgee, particularly between January and April; and*
- *high demand mainly met from Hume/Dartmouth.*

*A further recent trend over the past two years has been that net trade for consumptive use across the Choke has been from downstream to upstream.*

*In making decisions to continue trade relaxation, the MDBA has taken account of advice from the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder that environmental water would not be required to be delivered if supply restrictions were in place. This is an interim arrangement only but does allow trade restrictions to be lifted in most years whilst environmental water use is trialled and progressively optimised.*

*The MDBA would cease water trade from upstream to downstream of the Choke if it became aware of significant trades occurring in that direction in years when the risk of restrictions is also high."*

## **Basin Plan evaluation framework**

The MDBA released the Basin Plan Evaluation Framework on Tuesday 19 August. The framework can be accessed [HERE](#).

In line with the draft Evaluation Framework, the final version focuses heavily on environmental indicators and not much (if at all) on social and economic indicators. In addition, the document states that 'it is not currently possible for many social and

*economic indicators to develop the 'without Basin Plan' scenario' ..BUT 'comparative evaluation models will underpin much of the assessment of the effect of the Basin Plan on ecological outcomes in the Basin'....*

## **Draft Basin Plan Watering Strategy**

The MDBA is seeking feedback on the Draft Basin Plan Watering Strategy - [HERE](#).  
The associated media release for this is available [HERE](#).

The due date for submissions is **26th September** and we will be putting our comments together with our Members assistance.

## **MDBA Peak Body Meeting**

Mark McKenzie attended the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) Peak Bodies Forum in Canberra on Wednesday 27 August. The 2 key items for discussion were the just released Draft Environmental Watering Strategy for the Basin and the Sustainable Diversion Limit (SDL) Adjustment mechanism to be employed to assess projects designed to offset the volume of water needed to be recovered for the environment.

### Draft Environmental Watering Strategy

The strategy is now available on the MDBA website for public comment until November. Despite NSWIC concerns that the base flow targets in parts of the Basin are too prescriptive, the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office is comfortable that these levels describe the current target levels employed by the CEWH and are not too onerous. However, concerns were raised with the Authority that the target of maintaining the Lower Lakes at above sea level at all times would set unreasonably high public expectations, and climatic conditions may mitigate against this and other targets being realised.

### SDL Adjustment

First Assistant Secretary of the Water Reform Division of the Environment Department, Tony Slatyer, briefed the Forum on progress with the SDL Adjustment process. His key points were:

- The Dept is continuing to gather SDL offset projects proposed by the Basin States and has 17 already.
- These and any others will have business plans presented and approved by June 2015.
- The SDL Adjustment responsibility lies with the joint Government's - not with the MDBA, however the Authority will assess the level of adjustment to the SDL generated by each project and will be responsible for amending the Basin Plan to reflect the adjustments.
- The MDBA project assessment will be based on the CSIRO Methods Report that has been independently reviewed and approved by the joint Governments. This methodology will be released on the MDBA website to allow public scrutiny next week, but with caveats on areas of the methodology still to be signed off.

- The proviso on all proposed offset projects is that they have a reasonable prospect of success. NSW is playing catch-up due to the later signing of the Inter-Government Agreement. NSWIC is keen that the State Government step up its consultation with irrigation groups on the proposed projects - as consultation lies with each State Government; not with the Commonwealth. This consultation remains a standing item for regular update in NSWIC meetings with NSW DPI and Water senior management. [We will bring you details of each project proposed by NSW once to hand.]
- The joint Governments will agree on the project water saving targets relating to the 650GL of offsets currently factored into the Plan in June 2016 - with the Plan to then be amended to reflect the agreed offset savings. Governments will have to 2024 for final implementation.

## Electricity Updates

We have now submitted our response to Essential Energy's regulatory proposal. The final submission can be accessed [HERE](#). We thank all our Members for providing input to the submission.

As a next step, the AER will assess Essential Energy's regulatory proposal and release a draft determination later this year. We'll be sure to keep you posted on this issue.

### RET Review

Over 600 submissions to the review of the renewable energy target were received. The full list of submissions can be accessed [HERE](#).

We were contacted by the Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) about our submission and the topic of energy use in irrigation. ARENA intends to do a study on energy use in irrigated agriculture. We will follow this up with them over the coming weeks.

### Energy Efficiency Pilot Project

We have had a range of irrigators inquire about the energy efficiency pilot project of which the deadline has now been reached.

We are now in the assessment stage for all those who applied and will be contacting the successful participants. We look forward to updating you on the outcomes of this program with the help of the Office of Environment and Heritage.

### Meeting with CEFC

Cotton Australia and NSWIC met with the Clean Energy Finance Corporation to discuss possible finance opportunities for irrigators participating in the Energy Efficiency Pilot Project.

While the hurdle for accessing funding through the CEFC appears to be high, we will continue our discussions with them over the coming weeks to see what is available.

## NOW and DPI Meeting

CEO Mark McKenzie met with Director General DPI, Scott Hansen, and Acting Deputy Director General Water, Michael Bullen, in August for the first of scheduled monthly meetings between DPI, NOW and NSWIC senior management.

Discussions included progress with the restructure of water administration in NSW, with the management structures for NOW and the new Water NSW (the merged entity that will incorporate State Water and the Sydney Catchment Authority) likely to be completed in the next couple of weeks.

The meeting also covered State Priority Water Projects:

- On Farm Efficiency programs are progressing well, and an additional \$28m for programs in the Border Rivers and for some unregulated streams is also being negotiated with the Federal Government.
- Previous funding for the Metering Project in northern valleys will be redeployed - freeing up between \$110 and \$170 million for SDL Adjustment offset projects. The final funding figure will depend on whether the CARM Project goes ahead in the north of the State.
- The first Floodplain Management Plan to be developed under the Healthy Rivers Program will be for the Gwydir Valley, which will form the template for the development of Plans for other northern valleys. NSWIC is being briefed by NOW next week on how this program will be developed.
- The scoping for the Menindee Project is completed, and the first of the planned works - the tapping of the aquifer beneath Lake Menindee to augment Broken Hill's water supply - is planned to commence before the end of the year.

Under these regular consultation arrangements NSWIC will also meet with representatives from Water Minister Humphries' office each quarter.

## Water Monitoring Framework

On Tuesday 19 August, Minister Humphries and Minister Roberts announced the introduction of a new framework to map, monitor and collect data on groundwater resources in NSW. The Ministers stated in their media release ([HERE](#)) that the framework '*will transform how water data is captured and used to protect the State's precious water resources*'.

The framework (overseen by Land & Water Commissioner Jock Laurie) will initially be used to map groundwater resources in the Gunnedah, Gloucester and Clarence

Moreton basin. Once completed, the mapping of groundwater resources will continue across NSW.

Further information on the framework can be accessed [HERE](#).

## Mining and Coal Seam Gas

### Land Access Arbitration Framework

The report on the review of the Land Access Arbitration framework has been released. The full report can be accessed [HERE](#) and the NSW Government response [HERE](#). In addition, the NSW Government released a Q&A document on the report - [HERE](#).

It seems the report contains a range of good recommendations, however we will take a closer look at the document. Some of the recommendations would trigger amendments to legislation that will likely go to parliament in 2015.

## Snowy Scheme Tour

As previously advised, Irrigators Council has organised a 'behind the scenes' tour of the Snowy Scheme that will be running 26 - 28 November. We have received a lot of interest and the tour is now full. The majority have opted for the Murrumbidgee (Tumut) itinerary so we'll keep those who are registered, up-to-date with the tour planning.

## Cotton Conference

Mark and Mark attended the Wednesday and Thursday sessions at the Cotton Conference on the Gold Coast (06 & 07 August).

A fantastic job by Cotton Australia and the Cotton Shippers Association in putting this event together. The sessions and overall presentation made a big impression on everyone.

Very big congratulations to:

- Tim and Sally Watson - Monsanto Grower of the Year
- Brendan Warnock - AgriRisk High Achiever of the Year
- Zara Lowien - Chris Lehmann Trust Young Achiever of the Year
- Dr. Stuart Gordon - Cotton Seed Distributors Researcher of the Year

## RGA Conference

Stefanie attended the Ricegrowers' Association of Australia 2014 Conference in Swan Hill on Thursday 07 August and the RGA AGM on Friday 08 August.

The 2014 conference theme was "Sowing the seeds for an agricultural success story" which highlighted the growth of the industry since 1914 when the first commercial crop was planted in Australia.

## RIRDC – Rural Women's Award 2015

The Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation are accepting nominations for the 2015 Rural Women's Award. This is a fantastic program that "... supports women with demonstrated leadership capabilities, or leadership potential and community contribution, who have the desire and commitment to make a greater contribution to their industries and communities. It provides women with financial and professional support to implement their visions for primary industries and enhance their leadership capabilities".

The list of past winners is impressive and a testament to the importance of this program. Website link is [HERE](#) and for more information on nominating click [HERE](#). Nominations close **30 October 2014**.

## Beavers Creek Ceremony

A ceremony marking the completion of the Beavers Creek weir upgrade took place on **Tuesday 02 September**.

The Hon. Kevin Humphries MP was in attendance along with NSWIC CEO Mark McKenzie. The works are quite impressive and includes a very shmick fish ladder.

## Irrigation New Zealand

INZ have put together a 10 day trip to the US, including an irrigation trade show in Phoenix, Hoover Dam and then into the Californian irrigation heartland. Some time will be spent with Mike Wade from the California Farm Water Coalition, who some will remember spoke at our Canberra event in 2013.

Draft itinerary available [HERE](#) and spots are limited (total of 25), so if you are interested be sure to contact INZ.

## National Farmers Federation

### 2014 National Congress

The NFF have sent through an offer for Members of NSWIC to attend the 2014 National Congress - 20 & 21 October in Canberra. The Theme this year is 'Producing Our Future' and features an agenda that will explore a broad range of topics from farm-gate returns, infrastructure developments, youth in agriculture and global game-changers for agriculture. We anticipate that Mark McKenzie will be attending on behalf of Irrigators Council.

Members of NSWIC are eligible to attend this biennial event at a discounted rate (\$330). For additional information see the promotional flyer [HERE](#). To register for the Congress, you can do so [HERE](#).

### 35 Years Of Family Farming

A featured evening event at the NFF Congress is '35 Years of Family Farming'. This cocktail evening will be held at the National Portrait Gallery to celebrate 35 years of the NFF as well as 2014 being the UN International Year of Family Farming.

Irrigators Council was to nominate a family farmer who would be one of thirty five recognised at this event; however we did not get any responses to our request for nominees.

## National Farmers Federation

The NFF put out a weekly newsletter for their Members, much like the one NSWIC distributes. To access these newsletters, click the link beside the date of each issue.

08 August – [HERE](#)

15 August – [HERE](#)

22 August – [HERE](#)

29 August – [HERE](#)

## ABARES REPORTS

### Climate, Water and Agriculture ABARES Updates

The last two months of reports can be accessed on our website page link [HERE](#)