

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.



Christmas Break – NSWIC Office

Please note that the Irrigators Council office will be closed from **Monday 22 December** reopening on **Monday 05 January 2015**.

From all of us here at NSWIC, we wish you a wonderful Christmas, a safe and happy holiday break and an absolutely fantastic 2015!

Murray-Darling Basin Related

Basin-Wide Environmental Watering Strategy

The MDBA released the Basin-wide Environmental Watering Strategy - [HERE](#).

While the final document looks slightly different to the draft that was released in August 2014, the content has remained mostly the same.

Our previous submission to the draft strategy is available [HERE](#).

MDBA - Constraints Management Strategy Annual Report

The MDBA has released an annual report on its Constraints Management Strategy (CMS) - despite the fact that the Authority has only completed pre-feasibility on overcoming natural, man-made and management constraints in the Basin to engineer its ultimate aim of running flows of 80GL per day at the South Australian border to

achieve its environmental watering targets - including keeping the Murray Mouth open. The Strategy can be found [[HERE](#)].

The Strategy understandably has caused disbelief in Basin communities - many of whom have spent the last year advising the MDBA that their model for causing "controlled minor flooding" is based on inaccurate assumptions and unrealistic expectations on how flows can be coordinated to achieve minor flooding without 3rd party impacts. The response from Murray Irrigation Ltd is found [[HERE](#)].

NSWIC CEO Mark McKenzie said the Strategy shows that the MDBA is arrogantly committed to its model no matter what consequences this has for river communities, and despite the fact that it is not yet certain whether the water recovered for environmental flows in the 2750 GL claw back of water in the Basin Plan can be effectively delivered - let alone the 450GL of up-water prematurely assumed in the Constraints Management Strategy. Chairman Richard Stott said NSWIC intends meeting with Federal Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment Sen Simon Birmingham as a matter of urgency to discuss the CMS and strongly urge the Government to block any move to implement it until it is certain that there will be no 3rd party impacts from deploying flood level flows down the System - as previously committed to. NSWIC will also be requesting NSW Water Minister, Kevin Humphries, not to support moving the CMS to a feasibility level investigation until the issue of 3rd party impacts and regional irrigation communities concerns are satisfactorily dealt with.

Federal Government Urged to Review Future Buyback Methods

NSWIC has written to Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Water, Sen Simon Birmingham, urging the Commonwealth to chair a forum of interested irrigation sector groups in the Southern Connected Murray Darling Basin of NSW with a view to establishing a more strategic approach to future water buybacks - to avoid exacerbating the problem of stranded assets and over-recovery in NSW Irrigation Districts. The letter is [[HERE](#)].

MDBA Peak Bodies Forum

The notes from the MDBA Forum to update peak irrigator, indigenous and environment bodies on current Authority activities - in Canberra on 03 December - are [[HERE](#)].

Deputy Director General Water Appointed

Gavin Hanlon has been announced as Deputy Director General Water for NSW. He comes to the position from his previous role as Managing Director of Australia's largest rural water authority, Goulburn Murray Water in Victoria, and is described as having a *"solid track-record working closely with industry stakeholders and alongside Government to reform business, bolster customer service and significantly improve organisational performance and customer experience"*.

His past experience also includes the roles of Managing Director of Coliban Water in Central Victoria and CEO of the North Central Catchment Management Authority - also in that State. NSWIC is looking forward to working closely with him after he commences his new role on 27 January 2015.

Water Act Review

The Federal Government has tabled the Report and Recommendations of the Water Act Review Expert Panel. They have advised that the Government has accepted Recommendations 11 (on an ACCC Review of Rules applying to IIOs) and 15 (on a BoM Review of Water Data issues) to allow these reviews to be completed in the first half of 2015. The Government intends to respond to the other recommendations by mid-year. Significant among the recommendations is the freeing up of the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder to trade temporary water and invest in environmental outcomes other than additional water purchases - a recommendation high on NSWIC's list. The Report is [\[HERE\]](#).

Stronger Framework on Review of WSP's Urged

NSWIC has urged the State Government to set a stronger framework for the forthcoming Water Sharing Plan Reviews to ensure all significant anomalies are included in the reviews and irrigator organisations have ample opportunities for input and final review.

NSWIC CEO Mark McKenzie sent the following communication to both NOW and Minister Humphries office:

We are anxious to see an appropriate consultation process in place - particularly for the WSP process in the Lachlan and Gwydir Valleys which are the first to require completion of Water Resource Plans in 2017. However both these valleys irrigator organisations and other regional irrigator bodies are keen that all the major issues with the existing WSPs are raised, discussed and satisfactorily resolved. We request that plans are not simply rolled over with existing anomalies retained in the interests of a speedy signoff of the WSP - but with a promise that these issues will instead be included in the drafting of the WRPs. Further, as the Minister has on numerous occasions committed to a process where these anomalies will be reviewed with the aim of resolving them, and that irrigators will be the last group to look over the final WSPs before these are locked in, we are very keen to see that the second and subsequent consultation rounds and any template changes arising will have a formalised approach to in-depth consultation and integration of irrigators' proposed Plan changes into Plan redrafting.

The Council has voted to support a framework for this formal consultative approach on WSP review and redevelopment - as presented at our November Council Meeting by

Lachlan Valley Water. As a consequence NSWIC's strongly recommended approach is as follows:

- A WSP Consultative Committee including at least 4 irrigator reps (or an equivalent structure where this exists in other valleys) together with NOW and other Agency reps.*
- That the irrigator bodies have the opportunity to speak to their recommended WSP amendments in support of formal submissions to the Regional Inter-Agency Panels.*
- That issues arising from the WSP reviews be tabled and resolved at regional inter-agency panel level if possible, but if agreement at this level proves impossible that these be referred up to senior Agency officers and if necessary to the joint Water and Environment Ministers for concurrence.*
- That the irrigator bodies have the opportunity for review of the final draft of the WSP before it is signed off as per Minister Humphries commitment - and have the opportunity to again raise anomalies that have not been satisfactorily resolved in the Final Draft WSP Plans.*
- That the Government give an undertaking to use the 12 months extension of time to complete WSPs - rather than roll the WSPs over with major issues remaining for irrigators (with the dangerous potential that these problems will be than carried into the WRP process) . However, we again reiterate the need to expedite the development of the Lachlan and Gwydir Valley Plans.*

The locking in of these arrangements for the next rounds of the WSP Reviews will be a key priority in January 2015.

Electricity Update

The NSW network businesses were screaming loudly about the AER's draft [network determination](#). The main arguments were job losses and unsafe working conditions as identified in [THIS](#) SMH piece.

In response to the negative press around the AER's draft determination, NSWIC issued the following media release - [HERE](#) to congratulate the AER on reducing Essential Energy's revenue by over \$2 billion dollars.

We have put together a first draft of our submission to this review [HERE](#). Submissions are due **13th February**.

Irrigators Call for Further Cuts to Electricity Network Charges

Following from the Australian Energy Regulator's Draft Determination that Essential Energy's requested Weighted Cost Of Capital, Capital Expenditure and Operational Expenditure levels for the next 4 year determination period be reduced from the levels requested by the company, NSWIC has urged the Regulator to cut further in its Final Determination due in April 2015. NSWIC Media Release [HERE](#), which was picked up quite quickly and CEO Mark McKenzie conducted a series of radio interviews on the issue.

Senate Inquiry Into Electricity Network Charges

In associated news NSWIC has joined with National Irrigators Council, Cotton Australia and others in a Joint Submission to the Senate Inquiry into Electricity Network Charges. The Submission shows how far out of step NSW regional network charges are against Victorian and international charge regimes. The Submission can be found [\[HERE\]](#).

Mining Update

NSWIC Urges Planning Assessment Commission to Kill Coal Mine

Council CEO, Mark McKenzie, appeared at the PAC Hearing at Gunnedah on Thursday 11 December for the proposed Shehua Watermark Coalmine proposal on the Liverpool Plains. Mark raised the importance of ground and surface water to this important irrigated agriculture epicentre and called on the Commission to reject the proposal because NSWIC co-funded UNSW research and analysis of additional water modelling by the coal mine proponents had not presented comprehensive data that allayed irrigators' deep concerns over the threat to regional water resources, and the mining company had not presented the additional data called for by PAC itself in its initial direction on the proposal in June. The UNSW analysis forms part of a NSWIC submission to the PAC calling for them to reject the project application.

Coal Exploration Steering Group (CESG)

We have attended two meetings of the CESG and as part of their consultation we were given the opportunity to comment on a discussion paper regarding the process of allocating coal exploration licences. This is not an area we have had much to do with in the past but due to the potential impacts of mining we did not want to pass up the opportunity to make comment.

The discussion paper is available [HERE](#) and our submitted comments to it are [HERE](#).

Barwon-Darling Share Component Increased

The NSW Office of Water announced an adjustment to the long term annual average extraction limit (Cap) will take place as of 12 January 2015. This adjustment, an increase of 9 %, will apply to Barwon-Darling A, B and C class unregulated licenses.

NSWIC Member Barwon-Darling Water has been lobbying for this for a very long time. Media release [HERE](#).

Snowy Scheme Tour

There were 14 industry members and guests - including National Irrigators Council CEO Tom Chesson, Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder David Papps, and NSWIC CEO Mark McKenzie who joined a 2 day tour of the Tumut Project side of the Snowy Scheme on November 27 and 28.

Mark McKenzie's personal highlights were:

- The fact (and welcome news) that despite very low recent inflows, the Autumn and early Winter inflows into dams were above trend - meaning Snowy Hydro expects to deliver its Required Annual Release into the Tumut and Murray River systems in full next year.
- The sheer scale of the infrastructure and the fact that the Scheme was largely surveyed on horseback and the plans drawn up manually without the aide of computers - a mammoth and extraordinary achievement.
- The scale of the centrepiece of the Scheme - the Eucumbene Dam - currently at 50% of its full capacity of 4400GL, was breathtaking. It has only come close to filling once - in 1974 - but due to the requirements to manage airspace to generate hydro electricity the Scheme's 16 dams are very actively managed to keep airspace free for water flows for power generation. In much of the Scheme all water diversions lead back to Eucumbene to provide the head source of the Scheme's water.
- The extraordinary engineering feat in interconnecting dams by tunnels and aqueducts (the spoil dumps from tunnel works alone attest to the scale of the excavations.)
- The underground power stations - which included a drive through of the Tumut 2 Station at over 250 metres underground.
- The complexity of getting the commercial imperative to generate power balanced with the statutory obligations to deliver Regulated Releases into the 2 major Western flowing river systems of southern NSW - the Murray and Murrumbidgee. the intertwining of water accounts, target water volumes, drought and environmental contingency holdings and releases are very complicated, and congratulations to SHL Manager of Environment & Water Andrew Nolan and his colleagues for patiently explaining this complex Scheme's inner workings.

Suffice to say it would take a number of visits to fully appreciate the finer details of how the SHL personnel manage such a vast array of water and power generation assets. One look at the Control Room in Cooma, and the history of the Scheme laid out in the Discovery Centre tells you that.

NSWIC Levy Notices

The 2014/15 levy notices have landed in mailboxes across the state. This of course results in a great deal of additional phone calls and mail processing as we update customer information and highlight the work that NSWIC has been undertaking during the year with its Member organisations.

We thank all our Members and Water Access Licence holders for your support and look forward to working with you on the myriad of water related issues in the New Year.

Murrumbidgee & Yanco Creek E-Flow Releases

OEH have sent out an update on the use of the environmental water for the Murrumbidgee & Yanco Creek.

Scheduled 'piggyback' releases did not take place due to insufficient rainfall, so some of this water has instead been used for floodplain wetland watering in the 'lowbidgee' system between Maude and Balranald. The department are also starting an event in the Mid-Murrumbidgee and watching rainfall events to possibly send water down the Yanco Creek system.

More information is available on the OEH website [HERE](#).

Ricegrowers' Association

RGA / SunRice News

It was announced on Friday (28 Nov) that Gerry Lawson will be stepping down after 13 years in the role as SunRice Chairman. Gerry has a long standing relationship with the RGA and he has made a significant contribution to the rice industry. Media release from the RGA is available [HERE](#).

We would like to welcome to the new incoming Chair, Laurie Arthur.

2015 Tertiary Scholarships Open

The RGA have opened applications for the 2015 tertiary scholarships. The Greg Graham Memorial Scholarship (\$4,000) and the Peter Connor Book Award (\$1,300) are accepting applications until Friday 16 January 2015. A link to the RGA information page is [HERE](#) or call the RGA office on (02) 6953 0433.

Rural Industries Research & Development Corporation Scholarship

A reminder that applications for the RIRDC Horizon Scholarship close on 30 January 2015.

The Horizon Scholarship is a \$5,000 per year bursary for undergraduates studying agriculture at university and are passionate about agriculture. The support also includes work placements and industry networking opportunities. Information and applications are available [HERE](#).

NSWIC Website Update

We are happy to advise that our website is again iPhone and iPad compatible! A good bit of coding work by Charmaine has resulted in the drop down menus working again for Apple products.

We are constantly working on updating our site, so don't be shy.... drop by and have a look anytime!

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.

05 December – [HERE](#)

12 December – [HERE](#)

NFF are closed for the holidays, from 22 December 2014 to 5 January 2015.

ABARES REPORTS

Climate, Water and Agriculture ABARES Updates

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