

Irrigators Call For Federal Audit of SA Water Take (09/10/2017)

NSW Irrigators Council (NSWIC) is urging the Federal Government to immediately audit South Australia's water take after the acknowledgement that last year SA Water cancelled a water release order from the Hume Dam, but pumped a flow released into the Murray by the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder to flush salt through the Murray Mouth, to supply Adelaide instead.

NSWIC CEO, Mark McKenzie, said it was urgent that this practice of substituting flows is investigated by the Commonwealth because it runs absolutely counter to the objectives of the Basin Plan, which the SA Government is constantly stating is being undermined by NSW. Mr McKenzie also said there needed to be much greater transparency around the volumes of water being contributed by the Adelaide Desalination Plant back into Adelaide's water supply and how much this is saving in pumped volumes from the Murray, as well as the selling of water by SA Water to upstream users.

"NSW irrigators have recently borne the brunt of the SA Government doubling down on the allegations of theft of Commonwealth environmental water in the Barwon Darling system, yet, now it seems that this is exactly what its own water agency has been doing. We now know that no Commonwealth or State held environmental water was being delivered down the Barwon Darling at the time of the alleged water thefts in 2015, but having joined in with the Australian Conservation Foundation and the ABC in beating up the story against irrigators in NSW, the SA Water Minister, Ian Hunter, needs to open up his Government's water ledger to independent scrutiny – or stand accused of rank hypocrisy!"

"Minister Hunter has been constantly harping at the upstream States about abiding by the Basin Plan and how the Lower Lakes, Coorong and Murray Mouth need more water, so it is imperative that the practice employed by SA Water of pumping flows released for the environment needs to be thoroughly investigated. Frankly, whatever SA Water states about the legality of its water take practices it is a very low act by the SA Government to pump an environmental flow designed to increase the flows through the Murray Mouth, whatever the circumstances. It also smacks of a double standard if SA Water has been selling water to upstream irrigators while its Minister has been insisting that upstream irrigators contribute more to Murray environmental flows."

"The Federal Government must act to urgently audit South Australia's water take and water trading activities so that these matters can be cleared up by the time the Basin Water Ministers meet in mid-December, where all parties should recommit to the delivering the Basin Plan in a manner that optimises environmental outcomes, while minimising the social and economic impacts on the people of the Basin." Mr McKenzie said. ENDS.

For Further Information:

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