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## MEDIA RELEASE

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# South Australia floats their boats while NSW goes dry

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South Australian river operators claim social and economic factors underpin decisions about managing the Coorong Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth while the SA Royal Commissioner says using those factors for decisions is unlawful.

CEO of the NSW Irrigators' Council Luke Simpkins said, "The revelations rightly questioned why regattas are taking place in extra high lakes in South Australia, while fish are dying on NSW Rivers after the water has been sent down there."

NSW Irrigators' Council Chair, Jim Cush said the hypocrisy of South Australia was now being exposed.

"The South Australian Royal Commission into the Murray Darling Basin Plan found that the Water Act does not allow for consideration of the social and economic factors, yet here is the SA Government doing just that, while they continue to demand other States ignore their own economies and communities." he said.

"We now have reports [1] that the SA Department of Water is holding water in the Lower Lakes for yachting and irrigation instead of releasing it according to their own long-term environmental watering plan."

"This comes on the back of a report by Ernst & Young, cited by the Australia Institute [2] which found South Australia's substitution of Coorong environmental water is an example of the unique fraud risks presented by the management arrangements for environmental water."

"While they are protecting their precious lower lakes, the MDBA was making releases from Menindee Lakes to meet SA demands, and now we have empty lakes, dead fish, and struggling farming communities."

"It is irresponsible for SA to continue to cry foul on water management when they are so blatantly ignoring environmental factors to protect their own industries."

"NSW irrigation farmers are sick of being the whipping boy for South Australia and when we see this level of hypocrisy it is like rubbing salt into a fresh wound."

"Drought stricken farmers are watching the Murray River flow through NSW and Victoria approaching flood levels, and are not able to access the river water in order to supply SA."

Mr Cush said the revelations about SA's river management priorities simply supports industries calls for no more water to be recovered from agriculture.

"If they are not using the water as it was intended, or if they are substituting environmental water for what should be operational, then they should not get any more." he said.

The NSWIC has been arguing for socio-economic impact assessments for all water policies, plans or proposals and for these to be published as Rural Communities Impact Statements prior to any public engagement. That way everyone knows the impact of what is proposed.

Fewer farms, fewer jobs, fewer shops in towns, fewer children in school, fewer subjects taught by fewer teachers in NSW and Victoria, but maybe more sailing boats on the Lower Lakes. It's a matter of priorities.

"When we talk about socio-economic impacts, we are talking about the survival of our regional communities and their well-being – not a yacht race." ENDS

[1]

<https://www.weeklytimesnow.com.au/news/national/fish-die-in-darling-river-as-levels-maintained-in-sas-lake-alexandrina/news-story/9c82ce2515c98aab6d7256f3ff7d2db4>

[2]

[http://www.tai.org.au/sites/default/files/P661%20Coorongs%20don%27t%20make%20a%20right%20%20-%20Final\\_0.pdf](http://www.tai.org.au/sites/default/files/P661%20Coorongs%20don%27t%20make%20a%20right%20%20-%20Final_0.pdf)

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Approved JC/TN