

From: [REDACTED]
To: [independent panel first flush mailbox](#)
Subject: Lower Darling community concern
Date: Saturday, 30 May 2020 11:49:16 AM
Attachments: [pavey FPH.docx](#)

The whom it may concern

The attached letter was drafted after a meeting of the Menindee lakes sustainable diversion limit stakeholder group on February 19, as explained in the letter to NSW Minister for Water, Minister Pavey the group has many concerns around the first flush event and the communication emanating from DPIE Water at that time.

The Menindee Stakeholder group membership is made up of peer elected representatives from more than 20 different community groups and local councils, all representatives are volunteers and I have been elected the chair. The group cover a stretch of the Darling River from Wilcannia to Wentworth.

At the time of this email no response from the minister had been received. The letter was forwarded to the Minister by staff from within her own department and also handed to her in person on her recent visit to Menindee.

The anger and anguish that was caused within the lower Darling community by the decisions made at the time of this first flush event, that harvesting be allowed in the Northern Basin when there was no guarantee that sufficient water would make it to Menindee to restart the lower Darling and avert a massive natural disaster was absolutely enormous and can only be described as ludicrous. If the questions contained in this letter cannot be answered in full then the department will be shown to be incompetent.

Thankyou for the opportunity to have input into this process.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind Regards

Terry Smith

[REDACTED]

Terry Smith
Menindee Lakes SDLAM SAG Chairmman

The Hon Melinda Pavey MP
Minister for Water, Property and Housing
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Thursday, 20 February 2020

Dear Minister Pavey,

The recent implementation of 324 orders on flood plain harvesting and in channel water flows in the Northern Basin were initially viewed as a welcome step by the Menindee Lakes SDLAM Stakeholder advisory Group (SAG), the group wish to congratulate you and your department for implementing this initiative. The SAG also acknowledges your comments and commitment to get water the Menindee Lakes and the Lower Darling.

It was however extremely disappointing and distressing to hear that 324 embargo exemptions were issued for Flood Plain Harvesting for the period February 10th to 13th , of particular concern to the SAG was the lack of communication from your office, DPIE and water NSW surrounding the reasons for exempting the embargo. Real time accurate information with regard to what protocols are followed to allow the exemptions has been hard to source.

The SAG remains committed to work with all departments required in achieving an outcome that is acceptable to the community through the Menindee Lakes SDLAM project, group members have engaged in the SDL process in good faith. The lack of transparency around the 324 exemptions has undermined the group's confidence in due process and as such two representative organisations have pulled out of consultations and some other groups have expressed similar intention.

In order to restore the SAG's faith in transparency of process the following information is requested,

- The protocols that enable a 324 order to be exempted.
- Inflows and harvest volumes extracted.
- Information on how those volume totals were calculated.
- Times and locations of commence to pump and cease to pump activity under this exemption.
- The specific number of individual licences that were enabled to take under the exemption.

The SAG also requests the immediate release of the revised Barwon Darling Water Sharing Plan. The SAG membership is made up of more than 20 individual community representative bodies that exist along the river from Wilcannia to Wentworth and they are all acutely aware that outcomes in this water sharing plan will have direct consequences at Menindee Lakes and in the Lower Darling and Great Darling Anabranch.

It should also be noted that the motion put to the SAG to inform you of our above concerns was passed unanimously.

Kind Regards

Terry Smith

SAG Chairman