

Bega Valley Water Users Association (Inc.)

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Re: NSW Water Reform Action Plan

Thank you for coming to Bega and including this region in your consultation process. Unfortunately, due to the tight time line we cannot provide a more detailed response.

Please note that The Bega Valley Water Sharing Plan covers both regulated (Brogo and the lower reaches of the Bega river) and unregulated (Bemboka, upper reaches of the Bega and various smaller tributaries flowing into the unregulated system).

In over view, we appreciate what the Government is trying to achieve, however, we stress the following;

- The issues affecting coastal valley systems are very different to the MDB and should be considered and treated separately.
- It is not likely to be economic for meters to be placed on every pump. It is recommended the Government consider a combination of approaches.
- Any expansion in metering or transparency measures can not impede the economic development and growth of irrigators in coastal valleys.
- Any changes to metering and transparency will need to provide an improvement to the management and implementation of the water sharing plans.

In the Bega region we have been implementing water sharing on the **unregulated** system under the Bega and Brogo Water Sharing Plan for a number of years. The success of water sharing in the past was largely due to the knowledge and good service provided by one former DPI Officer based in Bega. Water meters were installed on most of the larger water users within the system to assist with managing water sharing. If operational, these meters could help us to implement an equitable water sharing system. However, we would still need assistance from the Government to help irrigators manage and police the plan. Unfortunately, whilst the meters have been in place for a number of years and irrigators have been charged for their maintenance, they have never been able to be used due to on-going maintenance and telemetry issues. In addition, water licence information that was once made available by a local DPI Officer is no longer available due to privacy requirements. We are now in a situation where we do not have the tools or information available to enable us to implement the water sharing component of the Water Sharing Plan. Interim measures we have implemented are placing unreasonable strain on relationships within our irrigation community. An improvement to this situation will be welcome, but not if it comes with an unreasonable cost.

The **regulated** system has operated successfully for several years using mainly mechanical meters, which have served the system well.

If these meters were to be replaced it would place an unnecessary cost burden on the irrigators, unless they were supplied and maintained by the government.

The mechanical meters on the unregulated stream are not used as a management tool, but are mainly used for recording of water use, for charging irrigators.

The management of the river flow is controlled through the river gauge at Angledale, visual observation of flows and liaison with the river controllers in Tamworth.

There are river height gauges on the lower reaches of the Brogo and after the confluence of the Brogo and Bega rivers which have not worked for some years; that if were repaired and had telemetry put on them, would be a more cost-effective method of controlling the Brogo system.

OR

If other river gauges the same as the Angledale gauge were to be installed on the lower reaches of the Brogo and another just outside the tidal zone, on the lower reaches of the Bega river, would also give the river controllers a very good view of the river.

The Brogo irrigators pay some of the highest WaterNSW and WAMC charges in the state with very little return in terms of river management from these charges.

With some creative thinking things could be done better.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Guthrey', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Stephen Guthrey

Chair BVWUA

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