

9 November 2020

Daniel Connor  
Director - Healthy Floodplains Project Delivery  
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NSW 2300

Dear Dan

**Review of NSW Border Rivers Model Build, Scenarios and Environmental Outcomes reports relevant to Floodplain Harvesting Policy implementation**

Our Independent Review of the NSW Floodplain Harvesting Policy implementation contained a number of recommendations regarding proper documentation of the model development process, model results for various floodplain harvesting scenarios and environmental outcomes assessments.

After accepting these recommendations, the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment asked the independent reviewers to continue to review the Department's responses to addressing the recommendations. As such, Tony Weber and Greg Claydon (the reviewers) have been involved in the review of initial drafts, supporting a redrafting process, and review of the draft final reports. This process has taken a number of months, but the efforts taken by the Department to develop these more comprehensive documents are to be congratulated, as they will form the basis for other reporting required across the Murray Darling Basin in NSW.

As you know, we have previously provided the Department with specific comments and suggestions on the draft final reports as presented to us over July, August and September 2020. Outlined below for your information and records are our summary findings for each of these draft final reports.

**Border Rivers Model Build Report**

We are of the view that the draft final version of this document reads very well and is a significant improvement on the previous draft sent to the reviewers. We believe this version is suitable for finalising and publication. There were at least 25 specific recommendations of the Independent Review which focused on documentation of the model build process and we believe that all have now been satisfactorily addressed with the exception of accounting for climate change. We understand that this is considered beyond the current scope of works for this modelling and we are also aware that the Department is considering the approaches to be used in some detail. It is therefore a matter beyond the draft final report we reviewed and we look forward to the Department's continued work in this area.

**Border Rivers Model Scenarios Report**

We believe the draft final version is a much-improved document and is now suitable for finalising and publication. There were still some areas of the draft final report to be finalised in the version we were presented for review, however we consider that the draft final report has addressed the specific recommendations made in the Independent Review satisfactorily. We do note the significance of this report in

presenting a clear overall picture of the “state of play” for water resource management, including floodplain harvesting, in the Border Rivers and believe it will be closely read by all key stakeholders.

#### **Border Rivers FPH Environmental Outcomes Report**

We consider that the draft final version satisfies our independent review requirements and recommendations. We made some mostly relatively minor suggestions and comments for further clarity in the draft final report. Our suggestions and comments were provided for the Department’s consideration in finalising and publishing the report. While the underlying limitations in the draft final report with respect to, for example, knowledge of change in hydrology/change in ecology relationships, available floodplain hydrological data and what modelling can be done with the available data and understandings, persist, the re-writing of the report has enabled a clearer narrative to be presented of the potential environmental benefits of implementing the FPH policy.

#### **Further assistance**

We note that both Tony and Greg have been asked to continue in their reviewer role for other valleys across the Northern MDB. In addition, Tony Weber has been asked to support the Floodplain Harvesting Review Committee with regards to Technical Support for the Committee’s deliberations. As such, we look forward to continuing to assist the Department in addressing our review recommendations and in the ongoing process of implementing the Floodplain Harvesting Policy.

We hope that the above summary review comments are helpful and confirm our views about how our Independent Review recommendations regarding proper documentation have been met for the NSW Border Rivers. As always, we are more than willing to assist in the interpretation of these comments and/or expansion of them should it be required.

Yours sincerely

**Tony Weber and Greg Claydon**

Independent Reviewers – Floodplain Harvesting  
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