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Form Information

Site Name NSW Department of Industry
Site Id 47409
Page Standard Name NSW Government's Water Reform Action Plan
Page Standard Id 134654
Page Custom Form Name Submissions on draft metering regulation and policies
Page Custom Form Id 171616
Url <https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water-reform/make-a-submission>
Submission Id 177086
Submission Time 30 Sep 2018 9:43 pm
Submission IP Address 1.129.105.0



30 September 2018

To Whom It May Concern

As an irrigator on the Billabong Creek, NSW and a member of the Pilot Project for the “new” meters with telemetry I would like to comment on a number of issues in the proposal.

We were part of the Pilot Project conducted, along the Billabong Creek, into the use of meters with real time telemetry and had one of the Siemens meters installed. This brand meter was ultimately not selected by Water NSW and subsequently we had an additional meter installed, whilst leaving the Siemens meter in place.

At the time we were told that the “new” meters would be installed across NSW and maintained by Water NSW, with an annual maintenance fee. We have had a number of issues with the installation of the meters and recently a failure of the installed meter’s flange and pipework rendered our pump inoperable for over 6 weeks. The meter is buried 2m under our major access to the property. Subsequently access was compromised and irrigation was unable to be carried out. This is COMPLETELY UNACCEPTABLE.

The pipework and installations along the Billabong Creek are now starting to show faults and problems in their initial installation and setup. The maintenance of these meters is starting to become a burden on Water NSW and it is obvious that they want to remove this cost from their operation. These problems will start to increase as the meters’ age.

Consultation Part 1- Who will need a meter

- Extraction sites for BLR and stock and domestic use should be exempt.
- Mining and gas activities should be required to meet the same metering and allocation requirements as irrigators

Consultation Part 4 – Other requirements

- The requirement to inform Water NSW of faults of metering within 24 hours of becoming aware of a fault, whilst not unreasonable it is often difficult to know when the meter is faulty and not reading correctly.
- The requirement to have meters repaired within 21 days is untenable with the lack of qualified technicians and the availability of these technicians for repairs. There is also the fact that often the telemetry and physical meter require 2 different organisations to complete the repair. There is the shifting of blame between the different bodies leading to delays and frustration in getting repairs completed.

Consultation Part 5 – Ownership of the meters

The new meters were installed as designated by Water NSW and we had no choice in their installation. These replaced privately owned meters that were working well and within the required parameters.

The new meters (of which we have three) were all installed below ground level (one over 2m below ground level) and in major access ways for our properties. Repairs will be expensive and time consuming and disruptive to the general running of our properties due to their positioning.

With Water NSW owning the meters there is one central point of contact regarding the maintenance of the meters. Water NSW is able to coordinate the repair of the meters as they know the qualified repairers.

The requirement for irrigators to own and repair meters, is unheard of. No other service provider, eg electricity, gas or town water, require the consumer to purchase, maintain and certify the accuracy and then revalidate the accuracy, of metering. This is completely unacceptable.

A number of the early installed meters will be approaching the date for them to be revalidated, this proposal appears to be a ploy by Water NSW to avoid their responsibility for revalidation and pass costs onto the irrigator.

It very much appears that the Southern Valley is being forced to change at the whim of Water NSW in order to reduce their operating costs and accountability.

To conclude I would like to strongly urge you to reconsider the private ownership of metering and maintain the status quo of Water NSW maintaining responsibility for the installation, maintenance and certification of all irrigation water meters across NSW.

Sincerely,

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