

# *Peel Valley Water Users Association Inc*

*The only organisation that represents the Irrigation Industry in the Peel Valley*

NSW First Flush Assessment  
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7<sup>th</sup> August 2020

By electronic mail to [independentpanel.firstflush@dpi.e.nsw.gov.au](mailto:independentpanel.firstflush@dpi.e.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Panel Members

## Submission re First Flush Event from Tom Woolaston

I have read the Independent Panel's draft report into the assessment of the management of the first flush event in the Northern Basin, and I now wish to submit the following comments:

### **Could more notice be given when extending an embargo?**

I have no problems having an embargo placed on pumping providing due consideration is given and that the embargo treats all impacted parties fairly. I am not sure when the embargo was started (possibly 26th January 2020) but on 29th I started to try and find out if it was likely to be extended by NSW Water and was told that they did not know, ring back on 31st. I was expecting the embargo to be extended but on 31st I rang again to be told that no one knew. The embargo was only to last until 31st but all that I could be told is that they would ring me when they found out. Unfortunately in the Peel the river rises and falls quickly meaning that most irrigators have to put their pumps back in the river and get them ready to irrigate. It is not just a matter of starting a motor. I was fortunate to have someone call me and tell me that the embargo was extended, most irrigators did not know that it had been extended. There needs to be a better way to notify those people affected.

### **Could all irrigators be treated equally and fairly?**

If the aim is to get the water as far down the rivers as possible then why allow the irrigators who have very large capacity pumps to store water for later and stop the irrigators who have small capacity pumps that want to use the water to get some fodder crops growing. We were still in drought at that stage with no crops growing. One pump on the Mooki would pump more water than all the unregulated irrigators on the Cockburn plus the regulated irrigators on the Peel WHO WOULD WANT TO PUMP. I say this from past experience of monitoring irrigators behaviour on the Peel. Under the WSP we would only have had very limited water available and not many irrigators would have been interested in using any. I cannot blame anyone but myself but because I gambled that the embargo would not be extended we readied our pump to have it go under water when the Peel broke its banks shortly after the embargo was extended.

**Would it be possible to ensure that those people who are writing reports be accurate in stating the true status of the water?**

On 31st January Allan Raine stated in a data sheet that as of 30th January the Mooki was flowing into the Namoi. Also discharges from Mooki River and Peel River have re-established connectivity of flows in Namoi River from Gunnedah to Narrabri. There was approximately 1800 m<sup>3</sup> of water that had passed Carroll Gap by 31st January but this water had only just passed Carrol which is still a long way from Gunnedah. If 30 m<sup>3</sup> of water had been used in the Peel the difference in the Namoi would have been almost immeasurable. My wife has a photo taken on the Namoi at Gunnedah on 3rd February showing a dry river. Why was this information given when it is obviously very wrong and I could not find any correction of these facts?

Please do not get me wrong I am not against the fact that an embargo was imposed nor the fact that it was extended (I would have called for an extension about 29th January. I do have problems in the way it was carried out and the way it was reported.

Kind regards

Tom Woolaston  
(Joint President)

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Attachment – First Flush document

Cc The Hon Kevin Anderson, MP; The Hon Melinda Pavey, MP

## Approval to take under Temporary Water Restrictions



Responsive management of temporary water restrictions

### Approval to take from the select water sources under Temporary Water Restriction (Northern NSW Murray Darling Basin) Amendment Order 2020

The holders of access licences in the water source specified in the Table below are approved to take water while the temporary water restriction is in place but only during the approval period as specified.

The temporary water restriction is in place until 17 February 2020.

Licence Category	Water Source	Approval Period (inclusive)
Regulated river (high security access licence)	Peel Regulated River Water Source	31 January 2020 – 7 February 2020
Unregulated river access licence	Mooki River Water Source Quirindi Creek Water Source	26 January 2020 – 7 February 2020

Further details about the temporary water restrictions can be found on the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment website.

### Reasons for Approval

Rainfall events in mid-January produced encouraging runoff from major tributaries flowing into the Peel River. Inflows from Cockburn and Goonoo Goonoo Rivers– Peel River re-established continuity from Tamworth down to the Namoi River junction, meeting its replenishment target at Carrol Gap. The estimated small high security take, if allowed, will not break the connectivity or replenishment target.

As of 30 January 2020 Quirindi Creek is flowing at a rate of 11.3 ML/d at Greenacre, and 7.2 ML/d at Dury Bridge. Mooki River is flowing at a rate of between 17.6 ML/d and 29.9 ML/d and is flowing into the Namoi River. Discharges from Mooki River and Peel River have re-established connectivity of flows in Namoi River from Gunnedah to Narrabri. This connectivity was achieved while allowing take from the Quirindi or Mooki Rivers from 26 January, as the pump sizes are small compared to the flow rates. Connectivity can be maintained if take is allowed up to and including 7 February. The approval to take ceases after this date in order to protect the tail-end of the flows.

Due to these circumstances, I am satisfied that there is sufficient water available for higher priority needs to approve the licence holders specified in the above Table to take water in accordance with their licence conditions. This approval will be in effect from 31 January 2020 to 7 February 2020.

This approval is given in accordance with the Temporary Water Restriction (Northern NSW Murray Darling Basin) Amendment Order 2020.

Allan Raine, 31/01/2020

A/Director, Water Planning Implementation, Water Group  
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment