

**MPII****MGI****YACTAC NEWSLETTER****Murrumbidgee Private Irrigators — Murrumbidgee Groundwater— The Yanco Creek & Tributaries Advisory Council****MPII Chairman's report: Murray Shaw**

Dear MPII Members

It is good to see our dams are in a good position (Burrinjuck 77% Blowering 54% as at November 7th), so we hope that future allocation announcements will reflect these dam levels. We are eagerly waiting for NSW Parliament to finalise the removal of the Millennium Drought from the driest sequence records used for determining water allocations. Once this is passed we should see a slight improvement in new season allocation amounts.

In May we were very disappointed to see the departure of David Harriss as the NSW Commissioner of Water. I believe the loss of someone with David's depth of knowledge and experience of water management within NSW and the wider Murray Darling Basin is very great. During the whole of the MDB Plan negotiations, David has proven to be the one bulwark that NSW and its consumptive water users had against incursions into our water rights by other states and the Federal Government.

It was very pleasing to finally see the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH) announce the names of the six Local Engagement Offices (LEO) across the Basin. This is a big step to making Localism something real, rather than a well used catch phrase when talking about implementation of the MDB plan. It will be the job of these LEO's to harness local knowledge to ensure the Commonwealth environmental water is used to its best effect. Linda Duffy is the Murray LEO and will be based in Deniliquin, while Erin Lenon, the Murrumbidgee LEO will be based in Leeton.

Murray Shaw**MGI Chairman's Report: Richard Stott**

Yet another year is flying by. While many people have been keeping their heads down and getting on with business, a number of issues have also been ticking on.

Through our representation on National Irrigators Council (NIC) and NSW Irrigators Council (NSWIC) I have ensured that groundwater irrigator's issues are considered and dealt with.

Energy costs remain a very strong issue for groundwater pumpers. MGI through NIC and NSWIC are working to see the establishment of specific agriculture tariff. NIC organised an Energy Forum in September to discuss strategies to deal with rising electricity costs. As a result of this forum a taskforce has been established to identify opportunities to decrease costs, increase transparency remove, distortions and deliver a fairer system. NSWIC has also invested a lot of time and resources into this issue and are one of the main drivers behind finding a suitable solution.

The pilot metering project on surface irrigation pumps in the Murray and Murrumbidgee valleys is just about complete. The next rollout of meter installations, targeting groundwater pumps, is due to start very soon. It was very interesting to see that in the north of NSW the metering project has been halted, after intense lobbying to the new Water Minister, Kevin Humphries, who is the MP of the Barwon Electorate in Moree.

In June a group of NSWIC members undertook a tour of the Santos run CSG bores in the Pilliga and surrounds of Narrabri. While Santos operations are impressive and the company seem to run a very tight ship, there is still concern with issues of the drilling of wells and preventing contamination between the different aquifers. NSWIC is in the process of forming a Mining and CSG Reference Group, which will assist in dealing with this heated issue.

Finally, after a number of years of excellent service as the CEO of NSWIC, Andrew Gregson decided it was time to move on to new challenges with the tobacco industry. NSW IC was very fortunate to attract high caliber applicants for the CEO position and Mark McKenzie took over the role of CEO at the end of March.

Richard Stott**Email us:****ivaquarisa@gmail.com**

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CSG/ Mining Exploration

In the early part of 2014 many landholders were concerned with the possibility of Coal Seam Gas Exploration and mining in region. In February MGI, MPII and YACTAC made a joint submission to the Manager Coal & Petroleum Titles and Systems in response to a number of Petroleum Exploration Licence Applications (PELA) made across the region. I am pleased to announce that all of these were rejected by the NSW Mining Minister. This does not mean that new PELAs will not be lodged. We need to ensure we are well informed of our rights in relation to access to our properties. MGI, MPII and YACTAC will continue to work closely with NSW Irrigators Council (NSWIC) and National Irrigators Council (NIC) to ensure your assets and rights are protected.



Ted Hatty, Richard Stott, Stephanie Schulte, Mark McKenzie, Iva Quarisa, Trent Gardiner and John Culleton, at a functioning CSG well site.

NSW Office Environment and Heritage

James Maguire the Senior Environmental Water Management Officer- Murrumbidgee advised that the planned Piggyback environmental watering events did not eventuate in the spring of 2013 due to lack of substantial rainfall to piggy back upon and approvals not being in place. This coming spring, despite approvals being in place and extensive event planning and stakeholders communications, it does not look any more positive for the proposed piggyback event. OEH are, however still looking to take advantage of any opportunistic high flows or "rainfall rejection flows" and order e-flows down the Yanco Creek system. These flows could be in the range of 1700-2200ML /day at the off-take and then could receive piggyback flow additions from the Coleambally catchment drain.

OEH are also working with Fisheries to look at the possibility of providing a Native Fish flow event. They are determining the height, timing and pulse requirements of such an event.

OEH are requesting to have an observer from YACTAC to attend the 3-4 annual EWARG (Environmental Water Allowance Reference Group) meetings.

Murray Darling Basin Plan

Things have gone relatively quiet on this front since the plan was passed through parliament. Focus is now on its implementation. Craig Knowles has announced his departure from the MDBA at the end of January 2015. We are now in the process of lobbying for a replacement who has practical experience in the water management industry and understands the river system.

Murray Darling Basin Plan (continued)

Socio Economic Impact

Phil Townsend has been doing some excellent in depth work into the socio economic impact of the MDBP and has some interesting data from the Murrumbidgee Valley. He is continuing to work to get the real story and MPII will ensure that MDBA CEO, Chair and board recognise the valuable information he is teasing out and allocate adequate resources to getting the full story.

Delivery Constraints

MDBA released the Constrains Management Strategy and are still working on ways to delivery Environmental water. The \$200 million budget allocated to overcoming the 8 key constraints, will have to be spent very wisely if it is to do any real good.

Adjustment Mechanism

NSW was the last state to sign the intergovernmental agreement and thus was "a bit slow out of the blocks" in relation to getting water saving project proposals to the MDBA. 19 projects in total have been submitted with most of these coming from Victoria. Feasibility studies for the projects are due at the end of 2014, with the business case due in 2015. In 2016 the final SDL, to take effect in 2019, will be announced. This will then result in a formal amendment to the MDB Plan going through parliament.

Metering projects/survey

As Richard Stott mentioned in his report the pilot metering project on surface irrigation pumps in the Murray and Murrumbidgee valleys is just about complete. Over 12 months ago a survey was distributed to members to gather your thoughts and experiences with the pilot metering project- thank you to those who returned the survey. Survey responses were low (16), which while disappointing, seems to indicate that most people did not have bad experiences. A summary of responses follows.

62 % said that the information provided by SWC in relation to the project and its outcomes was adequate and that the contact made by Comdain and/or their contractors in regards to installing the new meters was adequate and fit in with your operation.

Some of the comments on these two issues were:

- only in hindsight found out larger installations were not to be Mag Flow but BBS in pipe meters, which I believe would have suited my site being- cheaper and easier to install and maintain.
- SWC drew up plan without consultation and unbeknown to myself.
- Info provided by SW was too little too late. Comdain and sub- contractors had installed the meters before we had received SW letter informing of this.
- There was very little consultation in regards to the project. Very poor engagement with the people who would use them and overall unsatisfactory communication.
- Very limited communication.

At the time of the survey (August 2013) 87% of respondents had used the new meters and issues with them included:

- Original Siemens meter proved erratic. Replaced with Tyco Mag Flow yet to be tested on extended run.
- 3 of 5 not working
- Pump #1 earthing rings, incorrect wiring, creeping, blank screen, meter out for repairs for 3 months during summer cropping season. Pump #2 OK.
- Meters not working on all 3 meters installed
- One meter stopped and had to be fixed. It had a loose wire.

Metering projects/survey (continued)

For those who had used the new meter, measurement compared to the old meters were:

- original Siemens meter tended to indicate old mechanical meter was 8-9% fast
- 26% higher reading
- It is reading low
- Both pumps still have existing meters as well as new meters. Pump #1 Since repairs and recalibration new meter reads 22% less than old meter. Pump #2 varies short term between +3 and- -2.6% but over 230ML is within 1%
- Seems to be reading well. More user friendly with extra information
- We have 2 pumps- 12 inch and 10 inch- they were hooked up back to front.
- One meter reading 30% less than original. The original being the meter that initially did work.
- About the same. I think its pretty good at this stage. Haven't pumped a lot.
- Ok .the readings appear to be tracking expected pump performance tables.

General comments and other issues raised in relation to the new meters were:

- Need an independent flow rate check
- Pump #1 old meter has never needed repairs in 30 years but wear may have affected its accuracy. Am concerned that cutting the concrete pie and exposing the reinforced steel within the wall to water may cause rust and shorten the life of the concrete pipe. If so will SW contribute to premature replacement and installation? Pump #2 has black brute discharge pipe and so will not have this issue.
- Great Telemetric NOT working!!!
- I think they are OK
- To ensure that they work and that they give accurate readings
- What a waste of money.
- The delivery pipe used to install new meter on one pump is smaller than my old delivery pipe. This would be restricting my flow slightly.
- When the new meters were first installed and pumps were first used, the works had to be dug up to repair broken pipe. Then had to dig up again after that as there was another leak, dug up again and in doing so dug up existing electrical wires which then turned into a major job which was done at my expense.
- SWC did not indicate that licence holder would have to pay for the meters which in many cases were over capitalised with telecommunication systems that in effect will not be used for a long time and will by all commentators be out of date by the time it is feasible to do so. Thus a further upgrade will be made further increasing the cost. To make matters worse we imported the meters!
- SWC received the money from the Commonwealth as a grant and then it duplicity made a charge on the WAL.
- Now we see SWC making a bid to turn the cost structure on its head by increasing the fixed component (as a % of the total take) of the water charge—Cheap hit—I hope ACCC rejects their bid!
- The whole issue off “false meters” was over blown and smacks at the root of bureaucratic dishonesty just to resist pressure to downsize and reduce costs.
- SWC has avoided close examination and it has effectively shifted a large part of the cost associated with public water infrastructure onto irrigators., I expected this but am shocked how blatant the actions of SWC have been. I am amazed that NSW irrigators are being sat upon to make good the S A water budget. At least S A could chip in for a large part of SWC costs.

NSW Irrigators Council (NSWIC)

MGI & MPII have maintained membership of NSWIC, which gives both groups a valuable position in commenting on policy and irrigation related issues in NSW. The NSW IC AGM will be held in early November. Richard Stott will remain as a board member of NSWIC and will run for the position of Chairman again.

National Irrigators Council (NIC)

MPII & MGI have maintained its membership to NIC, with representation on a number of the subcommittees. Over the past year NIC has developed policy on a number of irrigation related issues and also developed position papers to explain these policies. Policy topics include Electricity, Constraints Management Strategy, Metering and Monitoring the use of Environmental Water, Trading Rule Between Groundwater and Surface Water, Entitlement Framework and MDBA Institutional Arrangements.

YACTAC Chairman's report: Richard Sleigh

YACTAC activities have been relatively quiet this year as the basin plan is in its implementation stage. We continue to push the importance of our system as an environmental asset to the whole basin. I think we have been able to achieve this, and for this we should be very proud.

I have decided after 14 years as Chairman of YACTAC to stand aside and allow new blood with more enthusiasm to move YACTAC forward. I wish the delegates all the best for the future.

The one constant I have had during my chairmanship has been Wendy Spencer she has always been on call to deal with whatever was required. She has offered her unconditional support and loyalty to me and all members of YACTAC and for that I am grateful. Thankyou Wendy

Jim Parrett has continued to manage our Natural Resource, driven by a passion for our system. When one looks for someone to do something for them they are not often blessed by having someone with Jims' enthusiasm, it has made our jobs easy, and I have no doubt we would not have achieved the outcomes we have if it was not for his dedication and passion for our creeks. Thankyou Jim

During my time as chairman I have had 3 executive officers to work with Lee Furness, Jenny Hehir and now Iva Quarisa To all of them I am extremely grateful for their guidance and support through some very difficult times with the drought that threatened to have the creeks shut down, the basin plan and the implementation of our NRM plan. I wish Iva well as she grows in to the job that at times will throw up some challenges that she has shown she is well equipped to handle.

I do need to single out one Delegate our Deputy Chairman. Russell Ford has been my shoulder to lean on and he has never said no to representing YACTAC in all sorts of forums committees and meetings. His knowledge and contacts are a huge asset to our members. He has made my job a lot easier. We have shared the same views and passion that our creek system can and has supported Irrigation in a sustainable way we just need to get this message across.

I would also like to acknowledge the support and understanding I have received from my wife Kate.

Finally I would like to thank my fellow delegates and all our members for allowing me the privilege to lead YACTAC for these past years.

Richard Sleigh

New Chairman for YACTAC

On September 25th YACTAC held it's Annual General Meeting in Jerilderie. Our Chairman, for the past 14 years, Richard Sleigh, resigned as both Chairman and Delegate on the YACTAC Committee. We thank Richard for his dedication over these years. He has led YACTAC on a way forward, been instrumental in keeping your creek flowing and developing YACTAC's Natural Resource Management Plan to make the people who make the decisions realise that YACTAC has a viable, environmentally sustainable creek system.

Russell Ford (pictured) was voted as the New Chairman and Colin McCrabb as Vice Chair.



Jim Parrett: YACTAC Implementation Officer Report

Willow Management

We have managed to do willow removal works on a number of properties on the Billabong and Yanco Creek, we also removed some dead willows out of the Billabong at Old Coree as they were causing flow problems.

The Colombo Creek is now completely treated except for one site which still remains in negotiation with the landholder, the remainder of the Colombo is now on follow up control only.

Mechanical removal of all sites on the Billabong Creek has been completed with only 2 problem areas remaining. We are still having troubles with NCT caveats and we are still in negotiations to access a very large patch of willows near a homestead. Both sites are major infestations on the creek and need to be treated in some form.

In addition to these 2 properties, we only have some smaller infestation to be stem injected and this will recommence November / December.

There are still a large number (I mapped up to 80) of willow stockpile sites that remain unburned on various properties. This was part of our landholder commitment under the original funding protocols, so please get it done over the next 12 months. If you are experiencing any difficulties with this task please let me know ASAP.

Invasive Aquatic Weeds

In the last 12 months we have treated a large infestation of Yellow Water Lilly on the Colombo Creek and a small outbreak of water primrose in the lower end of the Billabong Creek. We have also done an in-stream assessment and control of a number of water weeds including sagitaria from the Berrigan 14 escape to the Jerilderie Town Weir.

This season we hope to inspect all areas on the creek within proximity to either MIL and CICL Escapes as they appear to be a major source of aquatic weed infestation.

Murray LLS Biodiversity Project

YACTAC has entered into a joint venture with Murray LLS to deliver Biodiversity works within the riparian areas of the creek system, with a number of YACTAC members on the project steering committee.

We have put forward a number of projects that have been approved for funding. Projects include weir removal, boxthorn trial program and willow stockpile management.

The boxthorn trial program starts early October and we hope to be able to achieve a more economical and successful treatment method to deliver to landholders for long-term eradication of this invasive introduced species.

Part of the Biodiversity project will be mapping Trout Cod populations, first identified in the Fish Baseline Survey in 2013. I will be helping out with access and contacts shortly so if you get a call from me in relation to this you now know why I am calling.

Chairman's Departure

Richard, firstly a big thank you from me for having me involved in your environment and community, it has become a passion of mine and that stems from you, Richard.

Secondly, I have said it before and I will say it again, you have been an absolute champion for the creek system, its irrigators and landholders in general, a task not easily replicated.

The following is how I have found you over the years;

Resourceful Inspirational Clever Honest Aware Reasoning Dedicated

Superb Lenient Engaging Intuitive Grateful Hard working

I hope that we stay connected and I wish you all the best with your endeavors

Regards Jim

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