

STORAGE INFORMATION as at December 22, 2016

	%	ML
Coolmunda	90	62,200
Glenlyon	69	175,600
Pindari	98	306,800
Boggabilla Weir	100	5850

Once again, there has been quite a bit of activity around the Northern Review and Basin Plan generally. The Ministerial Council on water (MinCo) met in November and probably the most newsworthy item to come out of it was the blow-up by South Australian Water Minister, Ian Hunter, who directed a verbal blast at Victorian Water Minister, Lisa Neville, and Federal Minister, Barnaby Joyce about a letter to MinCo concerning the 450GL of 'Upwater'. The media picked up and concentrated on the choice language used by Minister Hunter towards Minister Neville, a fellow Labour State Minister, and in the process of covering the MinCo meeting, wrongly connected the Northern Review to the 450GL Upwater. There is no connection between the 450GL Upwater and the northern basin at all. This parcel of water was the last deal included in the original Basin Plan negotiations back in 2012 and is an additional parcel of recovery that goes on top of the original 2750GL Basin Plan recovery target, making it a 3200GL Plan. It was agreed to by the states on the condition that it only be recovered by means that are neutral in terms of social and economic impacts on basin communities. Minister Hunter got excited when a letter was written by Minister Joyce to MinCo saying that it would be difficult to deliver the extra 450GL without socio-economic damage to upstream Victorian and NSW communities.

The confusion around the Northern Review was created because that was discussed at MinCo the following day and the 70GL reduction in recovery for the north was wrongly interpreted by the media as a reason for Minister Hunter's colourful outburst. The MDBA actually explained that the 70GL reduction from the north would mean 15-20GL lower inflows into Menindee Lakes per year and that meant 5 to 10GL reduction at the SA border, less than a day's flow.

It didn't help when the usual parade of SA politicians all lined up to re-run the Basin Plan argument in the last sitting week of the parliament for the year. Independent MP, Nick Xenophon led the charge and

was ultimately left red-faced when he horse-traded some questionable water outcomes on other unrelated legislation passing through the parliament. While this highlighted the political sensitivity that still exists around Murray-Darling matters, it also reinforced that the plan still has strong bipartisan support at the federal level. The only thing that changed with the Basin Plan was a bit more scrutiny (Estimates Hearings) on the delivery of outcomes of the Plan, which could actually play in our favour in the long term.

It was interesting to note that the Opposition Shadow Minister for Water, Tony Burke, was circumspect in his remarks, as he was Minister when the Basin Plan was last passed through the parliament and was responsible for the Northern Review being included in it. While there was a great deal of political posturing in this last few weeks, we expect him and the opposition to support the amendments in the parliament.

Northern Review - The Numbers

GL	
3200	The total that can be recovered under the Basin Plan as it currently stands including 450GL 'Upwater' (southern basin only) agreed in 2012.
2750	Original (2010) total of Basin Plan recovery target
390	Original total northern basin recovery target - NSW and QLD
320	Proposed new total northern basin recovery target - NSW and QLD
278	Total already recovered in northern basin
247	Original 'Local Reduction' total for northern basin
143	Original 'Shared Reduction' total for northern basin
23	Original QLD Border Rivers total recovery target
29	Proposed new QLD Border Rivers total recovery target (+6)
16	Original NSW Border Rivers total recovery target
7	Proposed new NSW Border Rivers total recovery target (-9)

Northern Review

The outcomes of the Northern Review and the proposed amendments to the Basin Plan were a mixed bag for the Border Rivers. In summary, the original total northern basin recovery target is proposed to be reduced from 390GL to '320GL plus "Toolkit"' which are the non-flow measures we have been promoting for many years to offset water recovery. There is little detail yet around how the Toolkit measures will be implemented but the significant items here are the European Carp control (Koi Herpes Virus) and cold-water mitigation. These two factors on their own could comfortably deliver improvements above and beyond what 70GL of recovery could across the northern basin, but they need to be planned, funded and implemented. We have managed to get them considered as an offset only through many years of consistent lobbying at all levels and we now have to ensure that they are actually delivered in order to get the proposed 70GL reduction. We will maintain our initial position which is that the recovery should cease now at 278GL and not progress to 320 as proposed, so the greater impact that the non-flow 'Toolkit' measures can have, the better.

While overall, the total recovery from the valley has been reduced by 3GL, with NSW being reduced by 9GL but the QLD target was raised by 6GL for no other reason than 'they have to get it from somewhere'. As far as BRFF is concerned this is totally unacceptable and we have, once again, made our feelings known to both Queensland and Federal Ministers', as well as to the MDBA. This will be our position in the submission that is due in early February and will be taken into account by the Minister in his final decision on the proposal to take to the parliament.

We have worked closely with NFF through Cotton Australia and our Irrigators Councils on the #morethanflow and #enoughisenough campaign, and they have established a link on the Australian Farmers website that automatically creates a submission for you and then submits it directly to the MDBA.

Head to: www.farmers.org.au/morethanflow .

You can also do a submission of your own and lodge that through the MDBA submission site:

<http://www.mdba.gov.au/publications/mdba-reports/basin-plan-amendments> .

We strongly encourage all members to lodge a submission before February 10th, as this will be our only opportunity to get the recovery reductions we have worked-for for the last 5 years. An important thing to remember is that if this proposal to reduce recovery to 320 isn't successful, the recovery target will remain at 390GL.

The Year Ahead

2017 will bring some more significant steps regarding water entitlements in the Border Rivers. The review of the Queensland ROP/WRP will continue with our next scheduled meeting on submission issues occurring in late January.

The review of the NSW Water Sharing Plan (Regulated River) will commence and we will be pursuing better outcomes for members in this process as well. We still intend to do as much of the review as possible in tandem with both state agencies, but we already know this won't always be possible.

The NSW Floodplain Harvesting licensing project will continue with more detail on monitoring strategy and further modelling occurring in the next 6 months.

We will continue to be closely engaged with the state and federal agencies where our water is concerned. We hope the season continues to be a good one.

For member's information, Tim Napier was recently elected to the Board of the National Irrigators Council as the Queensland State Director. Tim continues as a Director of the NSW Irrigators Council, having been re-elected for a second term in November.

Coming Up:

Submission Northern Review – Feb 10th

BRFF General Committee Meeting - March 7th

Social Media

BRFF has a presence on the following platforms:

Website: www.brff.com.au

Facebook: @brff4390

Twitter: @brff1

Season's Greetings

The BRFF Committee, Rachel and Tim would like to wish all members and friends of BRFF the compliments of the season. We thank you all for your efforts in 2016 and commit to continuing to defend your interests in 2017.

We hope you find time to spend with family over Christmas, knowing that it will continue to be a busy time for many of you on the farm.

Have a safe and peaceful Christmas and we will be back on deck early in the New Year – January 3rd.