

Speak Up Campaign Inc.

Inc 1800187

speakup4water@gmail.com



Hon Chris Minns – Premier NSW

Parliament House

Macquarie Street

SYDNEY NSW 2000

kogarah@parliament.nsw.gov.au

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Dear Premier,

I am writing to you on behalf of my members who are a mixture of very anxious and concerned farmers, rural businesses and community members across the Southern Basin.

As another Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council meeting fast approaches, I want to take the opportunity to reinforce the view of those most directly impacted by the Basin Plan. These are the same people best placed to provide the solutions to the potential train wreck about to devastate not only an essential food bowl to the nation and national economic driver, but a region of natural beauty that must be preserved.

While well-meaning options, solutions and models are devised from city offices, it is your people on the ground and living and breathing the Basin Plan who are able to present the most practical, cost-effective and sensible solutions.

No doubt the Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism (SDLAM) and the 450GL of upwater will be front and centre at the next MinCo. Please see below our position, which we know is widespread in our communities:

SDLAM –

- Is not tied to the 450GL and should not be used as a tool (pawn) for the states to agree to the 450GL
- There needs to be far greater flexibility in the timeline and the projects under consideration
- There are many projects below the line (which did not make the 36 projects originally considered), which must now be considered to contribute to the 605GL SDLAM
- These projects have come a long way, despite interruptions like COVID and 2022 floods. These delays need to be acknowledged, as it would be poor practice to abandon them now

450GL –

- Communities will not accept changes to the socioeconomic neutrality testing
- Cannot be delivered without unacceptable flooding to private and public property
- Is not linked to the Basin Plan, it is an additional component agreed to as an afterthought and is not needed to achieve environmental outcomes, as pointed out by Tony Burke - [Here](#)



In both instances

- Buybacks are **not** supported (the “willing” sellers the Federal Minister refers to are people who are frightened to be left holding water with no industry or affordable means to have it delivered – they have lost confidence that sensible decisions on water policy will be made).
- On-Farm Irrigation Efficiency Projects are **not** supported and have an even greater adverse impact on the water market and regional communities.
- We need flexibility; every good plan has an element of flexibility if it is to be successfully implemented.
- We do **not** support any further reduction of the consumptive pool.

Recently, our organisation was made aware of this study from Frontier Economics and commissioned by the Victorian Government [Here](#), which highlights a number of alarming impacts of water reform, the two most prominent being –

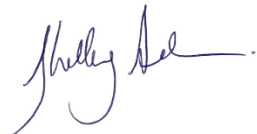
- Even without further water recovery from the consumptive pool there will be a reduction of 25,000ha in horticulture in the next dry sequence
- If a further 450GL is removed from the consumptive pool we will lose 95,000ha of irrigated agriculture

We need your leadership and strength at this time. There are many options and solutions being provided by communities, like the NSW Murray Valley Road Map developed by the Murray Regional Strategy Group (MRSG) [Here](#).

The best chance of achieving any environmental targets, either volumetric or outcomes based, is by co-design principles as outlined on page 7 of the MRSG Water Strategy Documents [Here](#). We hope you will encourage the co-design approach with the NSW Department and present it as a smarter option to delivering the Basin Plan, in full, even if not on time.

Can you please provide us with your policy positions on the 605GL SDLAM and 450GL, which your Minister will be taking into MinCo.

Kind Regards,



Shelley Scoullar

(Chair – Speak up Campaign)