

Speak Up Campaign Inc.

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The Hon. Melinda Pavey, MP

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Dear Minister Pavey,

Earlier this month you told fellow members of the NSW parliament, with the aim to reassure those listening from outside the parliament walls, food producers in the Murray electorate are valued by the NSW government and so is the significant contribution they make to the NSW economy. Also, the NSW government makes decisions with the implications on the Murray electorate in mind.

On Friday June 26 WaterNSW announced a supplementary flow event for the NSW Murray Valley [Here](#), without providing prior warning to the main water delivery company Murray Irrigation Ltd, supplying 1800 food producers.

WaterNSW states the reason for the availability of supplementary water is because Lake Victoria is guaranteed to fill, and there are increased tributary flows into the Murray downstream of Hume Dam.

This is fantastic news, even though it comes with no warning, for those who can access the water, as it will provide some with the opportunity to fill on-farm storages, and some may even use it to water crops already in the ground.

Unfortunately, for those 1800 food producers in the Murray Irrigation footprint they cannot access this water (despite facing two summers of zero allocation), as MIL is currently undergoing winter maintenance on delivery channels and with no prior warning were unable to make any arrangements to receive supplementary flows [Here](#).

The government may well have the right intentions for the Murray electorate, however your departments may not understand implications of their actions and the reflection on the value government has for the people of our region.

With all due respect, the following questions must be asked to ensure someone within government and bureaucracy does care about NSW Murray.

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- How did WaterNSW have so little warning about the inflows coming down the tributary / tributaries?
- How did WaterNSW have so little warning about Lake Victoria reaching capacity?
- What measures will WaterNSW put in place to ensure more notice is provided in the future?
- What negotiations will WaterNSW undertake on behalf of MIL customers, who could have significantly benefited from access to this supplementary event, to ensure they are not penalised in the future as they have been this time?
- How will WaterNSW develop strategies to ensure a more flexible approach is applied to these events (and all water management decisions) in the future which provide win:win outcomes, such as
 - This supplementary event could be part of baseline flows to South Australia or for environmental flows further downstream, with a credit applied to next season's consumptive pool
 - Paper transfer of water between accounts so food producers do not consistently feature last when resources are allocated
 - Meet downstream needs (orders) with supplementary flows, credit this to productive pool for the start of the new season

People in our communities matter, but there is strong doubt this is appreciated by many within our water management bureaucracy. People who had financially viable and thriving businesses until the Murray Darling Basin Plan and changes to Water Sharing Plans are now struggling with threatened livelihoods and the unfortunate mental health issues associated with the changes forced upon them. They have been placed in this position due to decisions outside their control, many of these made with questionable scientific rigour. As they fight for their livelihoods some have been accused of being bullies, conspiracy theorists and combative when they bring issues to the fore and provide solutions.

Please encourage your departments to develop greater flexibility and understanding around water availability announcements so hope can be reinstated in struggling communities who have lost faith in all levels of government.

Sincere Thanks,
Shelley Scoullar
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