

Report - Canberra Correspondent August 2018

Groundhog day is upon us.

Concerns that the Federal agencies are forging ahead as if Victoria and NSW had no objections to its previous assumptions are well founded, which is why it is absolutely essential that we do not let up in calling for transparency so that someone can actually be held accountable for decisions made.

The Communique from the last MinCo meeting in June (Speak Up and our Aust Federal Police colleagues attended) makes it clear the Feds gave no ground and despite the public comments by the State Governments the Federal Agencies are doing what they were always going to do.

*"In relation to the potential for on-farm infrastructure efficiency measures, state and territory governments and the Commonwealth government will work to develop agreed additional program criteria to ensure neutral or beneficial socio-economic outcomes. Additional program criteria **could** take into account wider regional impacts and the impact of cumulative implementation of programs. This work will come to the **next** Ministerial Council meeting for decision by the end of 2018.*

*Ministers further agreed that officials would develop an efficiency measures work plan through to 2024, consistent with the **COAG Plan**. This will deliver a pathway to **achieving** the remaining water recovery of 450 gigalitres through efficiency measures with neutral or beneficial socio-economic outcomes."*

What it says to me is that it is absolutely critical that State Governments release the proposed schedule to the Basin Plan Implementation Agreement [Here](#) .

I believe that it is absolutely critical that communities know what the State and Federal Governments are signing them up to. I can see no logical reason for why the draft documents should not be made public.

An area I have been working on is trying to put a spotlight on what environmental water is doing what; whether it is being monitored in real-time and how that is influencing decisions in real-time. We have been working on the latest releases out the barrages and why the Lower Lakes are being run at a minor flood level.

More environmental water on its way to an already 'super charged' Lower Lakes. If, due to wind storms creating unfavourable conditions for the 'pulse' to do the job that the State and Federal agencies say it is meant to do, namely to put a 'freshening flow into the Coorong' and was also about 'enhancing the upstream migration and spawning of pouched lamprey, a primitive eel-like fish', then it would make sense to re-regulate the environmental on its way down to the Lower Lakes and use it for productive use or as SA's entitlement flow, rather than keep wasting water if it's not achieving its environmental objectives.

Governments continue to mull over additional drought measures and it is important to keep up the pressure on each layer so they can implement an appropriate response. The language at the moment around the drought is all about farmers - it's too narrow and should become about our towns and communities.