

CENTRAL DARLING SHIRE COUNCIL

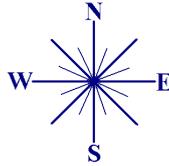
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Draft Border Rivers Regional Water Strategy

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Border Rivers Water Sharing Plan. Central Darling Shire Council supports the development of such plans and the seeking of wide community comment.

Central Darling Shire is located on Darling River and its community recognises the importance of a connected and healthy river ecosystem. During the last drought and the resultant period of no flow in the river, the community experienced first-hand the following impacts:

- towns with severe water restrictions, having to source bottled water for drinking
- devastating fish kills at Menindee,
- drying of the region's wetlands
- the loss of cultural connection by our first nations peoples to the river

The Border Rivers and Barwon/ Darling River must be managed on a "whole of catchment" to ensure waterway connectivity to deliver to downstream communities a healthy, reliable, and resilient water resource. No subsection of the catchment can be considered in isolation given the Border Rivers contribute approximately 19% of flows to the Darling River.

This is particularly important in dry years and the critical issue is how to turn off Floodplain Harvesting, even in tributaries to ensure first flush water can get downstream to a dry/drying river. This should be a priority objective.

Small, localised flows in tributaries are significant to achieving a connected Darling system. Higher flows start to involve supply to the Murray River, but by the time this has happened the base needs of getting first flush water along the Darling have been met. Clear and transparent policy and regulatory arrangements must be put in place to allow timely Ministerial/ Departmental actions for orders to achieve connectivity by preventing harvesting between the water sources after extended periods of no flow.

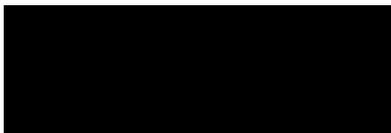
To further strengthen any regulatory framework all unauthorised floodplain works that contribute to adverse impacts must be removed. Retrospective or deemed approvals should not be considered.

Floodplain flows are a natural feature of all rivers and have many beneficial impacts for riverine ecology including natural recharge of aquifers. As access to groundwater resources becomes more important it is imperative that the Great Artesian Basin and localised groundwater resources be protected and managed including opportunities for recharge.

A connected Darling River is critical for the environment, economic prosperity, and social health of all communities along the river. This is particularly important to our First Nations peoples along the length of the Rivers who have a long cultural connection to the water and country.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely

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