

Dear –

I'm writing to express my concern about the current politics being played around the NSW Flood Plain Harvesting licencing and measurement process.

We started irrigated farming in 1978 in the Gwydir valley and Flood plain harvesting has always been an integral part of that operation since inception.

In the 1970's the NSW Government built Copeton dam in the Gwydir valley and then encouraged farmers like us to develop an irrigated industry to utilise the new infrastructure, the catchment area for Copeton is only about 15% of the valley catchment and so Licences were issued for shares of the water in Copeton, but access was also granted to High flow water and Flood Plain water in the valley and we all were encouraged to build on farm storage to support Copeton because of its small and unreliable catchment to ensure our industry had the scale and flexibility to maintain a viable and efficient industry.

In the 1990's we were put through the "Water Sharing Process" whereby the high flow portion of our water access was converted to a volumetric entitlement and shares to the resource issued.

The current FPH licencing process is the last step in the process of converting all of our water access entitlements into a volumetric entitlement with shares issued so that we can measure our take accurately and ensure we conform to the plan and don't exceed the Valley take that existed in 93-94.

I can't stress enough how integral a part of our business FPH is, we simply cannot survive on General Security and Supplementary access alone because of the unreliability of flows in the Northern valleys.

As stated earlier FPH take is an integral part of our farming system, it allows us to take advantage of the episodic floods we usually experience and gives us the ability to store our general Security water in the efficient storage Copeton offers without evaporation forcing us to use water more quickly on less efficient crops and systems. This also allows us to build businesses that can survive the dry spells and support continual employment in our communities.

The current modelling from the department has been designed to provide a licencing, measurement and accounting system to hold the valley at its 93-94 take commitment, an important part of this system is the accounting process and the account initialisation of 500%.

I believe the account initialise part of the process has been communicated poorly and as such been poorly understood making it a politically unpopular part of the process, I would like to remind you that the account initialisation at 500% is an integral part of the department modelling to ensure our long term average take is no more but no less than the 93-4 level, if the account initialisation is reduced or removed then there will need to be other adjustments made to ensure access is retained at levels assured by governments for the past 25 years without unfairly penalising those involved in the process.

I encourage you to please support the current FPH licencing process to include full account initialisation so that we can have this form of access licenced and measured for the first time and to finally put an end to 30 years of uncertainty around what our access will be in the future.

This whole process is extremely complex, stressful and demoralising for us, and we would love to extend an offer to have you visit our home and gain a more thorough understanding of how our northern Valleys operate.

Kind Regards

NAME REDACTED