



Press Release

Call for an Environment Flow in the Barwon Darling River System

The Mayor of Bourke Shire Council, Councillor Barry Hollman has written to the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder Jody Swirepik, requesting urgent consideration be given to providing an Environmental Flow in the Barwon Darling River System as the drought continues to grip this part of the state. The period of “no flows” in the river system is now approaching record territory even allowing for the environmental flow received in May 2018.

Councillor Hollman said the flow last year, which was dubbed the “Northern Connectivity Event” was a huge success with the flow reaching Wilcannia. This flow provided a much needed flush and topping up of the river system.

Councillor Hollman said that last year’s “Northern Connectivity Event” was an excellent example of intergovernmental collaboration and to this end indicated that Council has written to the New South Minister for Regional Water the Hon. Niall Blair MLC seeking his support for the flow.

Councillor Hollman said that the General Manager of Bourke Shire Ross Earl will continue to work closely with the Office of the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder and other Government agencies on the issue to try and bring a flow to fruition

In her response to Bourke Shire Council the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, Jody Swirepik, has indicated that she is actively considering the request and has indicated that she will get back to Council within two weeks.

Jody Swirepik has indicated that there were a number of issues to consider as part of the determination process including the limited availability of Environmental Water held by the various agencies and the fact that the 2018 flow went along a wet river bed. The situation in 2019 is vastly different with a parched river and a much greater amount of water would be required to receive the same outcome. She has also indicated that there is a significant risk that a release of water from storages could lead to a front of de-oxygenated “black” water

from the de-stratification of stagnant pools which could lead to further fish deaths and undermine the environmental benefits of the flow.

Councillor Hollman said that Commonwealth and State agencies will need to work together to mitigate these risks if a flow is going to occur.

Councillor Hollman said Bourke Shire is confident of obtaining the support for the proposed flow from all Councils along the Barwon Darling System. He said he looks forward to a positive decision to the request and obtaining the same level of cooperation from all stakeholders that was forthcoming during the planning and delivery of the “Northern Connectivity Event” in 2018.

END

Contacts

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