



MEDIA RELEASE

BOURKE SHIRE CALLS FOR URGENT REVIEW OF EMBARGO ON PUMPING SOUTH OF THE CULGOA RIVER JUNCTION WITH THE BARWON DARLING RIVER

Mayor of Bourke Shire, Councillor Barry Hollman today has requested that the New South Wales Department of Planning Industry and Environment (DEPI) review, as a matter of urgency, the need for the embargo on the Barwon-Darling River system south of the Culgoa junction which was announced on Friday, 28th February 2020.

Councillor Hollman said he and his Council had wholeheartedly supported the need for an embargo on the entire river system to ensure that the river received a much needed flush and recharge and was conscious of the need to achieve the target inflow into Lake Wetherell of 60-70,000 mega litres.

The target of 60-70,000 megalitres should be easily reached and exceeded and consideration should be urgently given to allowing irrigators below the Culgoa junction to be able to extract water in accordance with the licence entitlements he added.

Figures released by Water New South Wales via their Operations Update have indicated that up until 28th February 2020, 70,000 megalitres had passed Bourke and this water coupled with the flow over the weekend means that in excess of 100,000 megalitres has passed through Bourke with no access yet being made available for extraction with the lifting of the previous embargo restricted to the area above the Culgoa junction

Councillor Hollman said that the flow from Culgoa into the Barwon Darling System is expected to be well in excess of 100,000 megalitres and may even be double that amount and that water is expected to reach the Barwon-Darling in the coming weeks.

He also noted that much of the Warrego is in flood at Cunnamulla and downstream this water will reach the Darling between Bourke and Louth and will then flow largely unimpeded into Lake Wetherell. While appreciating the difficulty is accurately determining the amount of water that will become available, it is clear that there is more than enough to boost the current target into Lake Wetherell.

Councillor Hollman said he and the Council were very aware of the importance of the irrigation industry to Bourke and the positive impact it has on the economy of the district and the employment opportunities it provides.

He said that it has been many years since the industry had a full allocation of water and it was important that the opportunity that is now available to re-invigorate the industry is not lost. The review of the current embargo needs to be undertaken immediately if the opportunity to pump water is going to be available to irrigators downstream of the Culgoa Junction.

During the periods of extended drought conditions the Bourke business sector has suffered a significant downturn and the opportunity now also exists for them to receive a much needed boost via improved agricultural activity.

Councillor Hollman said he appreciated the difficult task that the Departmental Officials have in the allocation of water and that there were a number of competing demands but reinforced the importance on the economy of Bourke of the availability of water and called for the water to be made available in accordance with the provisions of the Water Sharing Plan.

Councillor Hollman highlighted the fact that there is only a relatively small window of opportunity to be able to take advantage of the flows that are currently available and it is important that this window of opportunity was not lost.

He stressed that he and Bourke Shire Council remained committed to a healthy river.

He said that the water that will now be available for other purposes including agriculture should be equitably allocated to all users along the river.

He said that the lifting of the embargoes above the Culgoa junction was a positive step in ensuring this equitable spread and that similar action needs to be undertaken to assist those users below that junction as once the flows has passed Bourke that window of opportunity for Bourke will be lost.

End

Further information contact Mayor Barry Hollman 0409037903 or General Manager Ross Earl 68 308000.