



**BOURKE
SHIRE
COUNCIL**

MEDIA RELEASE

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Bourke and Louth Weirs

Following the raising of significant concerns by Bourke Shire Council at its March 2024 meeting regarding the proposed Louth Weir Fishway and Weir Project, Bourke Shire Council Mayor, Barry Hollman, and General Manager, Leonie Brown, met with NSW Minister for Water, the Hon Rose Jackson, at Parliament House in Sydney on Thursday 9 May 2024.

Concerned at the level of consultation undertaken by Government in respect of the Project, Councils Mayor and General Manager met with the Minister to discuss the controversial project and further pushed for the long-lobbied increase in the height of the Bourke Weir.

“It was most timely for the General Manager and I to meet with the Minister just two (2) days after community consultation was undertaken by NSW Water with residents from Louth and surrounds,” the Mayor said.

He continued, “At this consultation meeting I am advised that those in attendance had no issue with proposals to construct a fishway at Louth to allow the passage of fish both up and down the Darling Baaka river system, however all in attendance were both unanimous and adamant that such a fishway should not be at the expense of the height of the existing weir at Louth, nor at the expense of the removal of weirs 19A and 20A along the river system.”

The Mayor said that he advised the Minister that any lowering of the height of the Louth weir, or removal of weirs downstream of Bourke, would have a significant impact on the Louth community and those who access water from the Darling Baaka water system for critical human needs.

“It’s fine to have fishways installed, but it can’t be at the expense of water for critical human needs.” the Mayor noted. “I consider that some time those who propose these works, who live far away from us, lose sight of the need for water for small rural localities,” he added.

Whilst water is currently plentiful in the Darling Baaka, the Mayor noted that everyday Shire residents are undoubtedly a day closer to further dry times. “If the height of a weir is reduced, the amount of water in the weir pool is decreased, which means less water for residents. It’s that simple,” the Mayor said.

The Mayor advised that the Minister assured him that no work at Louth was imminent and at this stage the Government was very much listening to the people with the current proposals being the start of the conversation. “We have to start somewhere,” was the Ministers comment, the Mayor advised.

Councillor Holman also advised that the opportunity was taken to brief the Minister on Councils priority strategic pursuit that would result in the height of the Bourke Weir being increased.

“The long-pursued issue of improved water security for Bourke has not gone away from Councils perspective and it was good to be able to explain the needs of the community in person to the Minister,” the Mayor said.

“An application for funding for a comprehensive Business Case for raising the Bourke Weir was submitted by the State Government to the Federal Government as part of Round 1 of the National Water Grid Program.”

The Mayor noted that the Round 1 Program is a competitive process with the Mayor noting that the Minister had advised him that water security for Bourke was a priority and important to Government.

“The Minister listened to our points as raised at the meeting and showed genuine concern as to the communities challenges,” the Mayor said.

“I thank Minister Jackson for meeting with us and I look forward to her Department coming back to the community in June 2024, as she advised at the meeting,” the Mayor said.

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