

Submission to Ipart- Costs of NSW Water

From : Stratharlie Pastoral Company P/L

We are mixed farmers in the Peel Valley and have been irrigating for a considerable time probably the best part of 100 years. During the 1960's we were encourage to expand to reduce the impacts of drought. Costs were low with a high input of labour. Many farmers would reduce or cease irrigation in good time for a variety of reasons and in our case it often to time to repair damages done by floods which often followed dry times. The Peel River is a relatively fast flowing river with the altitude dropping 300 feet from Tamworth to our property, a distance of 44kms by road. During the last flood considerable erosion occurred for which we had an approved grant for \$75000.00 to repair damage mainly for the restoration of our pump site. Unfortunately we had to forfeit approximately \$50000.00 because to comply with Water NSW regulations the repair was in excess of \$200000.00 for which we could not afford. There is a fear of doing work to the river banks because of the fines that can be imposed by NRAR. The Peel River is constantly moving and to stabilize it is

cost prohibitive and Water NSW is not interested in assisting.

When I became involved with irrigating in the 1960's the department of WC and IC was the governing body and there were three helpful people in Tamworth that ran the office and read the meters for the Peel.

Now I do not know how many people are involved nor is it easy to find someone to assist let alone knowing them. (There are a couple of employees that are most helpful but are still restrained by the paperwork and rules of NSW Water)

The costs imposed by NSW Water are rising at an alarming rate without any added benefit to the Irrigators. There appears to be a considerable amount of money wasted by the department in inefficient systems, duplications and an incredible amount of paperwork. I recently paid an invoice twice. This was because I get various invoices and in this case I paid one invoice which was mailed to me and another which was emailed to me. (This happened during harvest when there are additional time constraints) I applied to have this amount reimbursed but was told that I would have to apply in writing to have it refunded and it would take 3 weeks. The amount was for \$2578.48 and there would not be any further invoices for this account for 12 months. Surely a business can treat its customers more fairly. There is no reason in this day that a customer cannot have accounts combined. There would be a huge saving in paper.

There are inequalities between licenses. We have a well license which is correctly subjected to aquifer rules and our neighbour who has a well half the distance from the river (in an aquifer) is subjected to fractured rock rules. Twice in my time I have seen the Peel River stopped flowing at our place for approximately a month and although we were entitled to water from Chaffey Dam Water NSW refused to send it.. Both times were around November and occurred because Water NSW did not consider the movement of water from the Peel River to the adjoining Aquifers.

Because the irrigators in the Peel are only allowed to pump about one fifth of our entitlement (on average) our true entitlement charges are considerably more than they appear to be.

The foregoing question is important in the context of the statement in the conclusion to Attachment F which states on page 195: “NRAR’s costs to be recovered from water users through IPART’s 2025 price determination average \$33.5 million annually over the price period from 2025 to 2030”. That amounts to \$167.5 million over the five-year review period and I maintain that the user share should be zero, not \$167.5 million. I dispute that this is an “impactor pays” cost – it is a community cost. If I remember correctly NRAR employed a consultant to help justify their existence.

Also this department would not have existed if it were not for the media.

The irrigators have installed water meters that can be read and monitored by Water NSW whenever they want. This has been another burden that irrigators have had to endure. There has been a considerable cost in trying to get the rules of the Murray basin determined and one cannot help but wonder over the years how much has been achieved and at what cost.

It is time that Water NSW became efficient and in turn keeping our costs to a minimum. Water NSW should not be allowed to think that irrigator funds are unlimited and they must consider what industries they want to survive the cost burden they are wishing to impose. The cost increases imposed will force certain industries to close their doors because water costs are too high. Is this what the government wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Thomas Woolaston