

Media Release 20 February 2018

Manjimup and Pemberton Landowners ask Premier to Restore Water Rights

Manjimup and Pemberton Landowners (MPL) have asked Premier Mark McGowan to restore rights to self-supply water in 14 sub-catchments closed in November to favour the Southern Forests Irrigation Scheme. They are not satisfied with responses from Minister for Water Dave Kelly and have asked the Premier to intervene.

MPL say when the State Government made a \$3.6 million grant in 2015 to start the Irrigation Scheme then Minister for Water Mia Davies and Terry Redman said it was for an extra 12 gigalitres of water for food production. But instead the water is being reallocated from what had been planned for use for self-supply water farm dams.

MPL convener Neil Bartholomaeus said the *Warren-Donnelly surface water allocation plan* states that a large scale irrigation project is beyond the scope of the plan.

“When the Government decided to take the 12 gigalitres of water from the allocations provided for self-supply they should have applied procedural fairness and issued a revised water plan for public comment to give everyone an equal say.

“The Minister for Water says there has been consultation with the local Warren Donnelly Water Advisory Committee when in fact the Department of Water shut down the 14 sub-catchments on 16 November 2017 before the Committee met on 5 December.

“There was no opportunity for public comment and no proper consultation before the sudden closure of water catchments vital for self-supply, causing frustration and anxiety for food producers who want to construct new dams this summer,” Mr Bartholomaeus said.

Mr Bartholomaeus said the water grab by the Minister and his Department was a stupid move and had caused unnecessary controversy for the Southern Forest Irrigation Scheme.

“Self-supply water users are beyond tolerating the Department’s dictatorial style which ignores the excellent provisions for statutory water management plans and local water resource management committees legislated in 2000 but ignored by successive State Governments.

“We have brought to the attention of the Premier the denial of procedural fairness through maladministration of the *Rights in Water and Irrigation Act* (1914).

“None of the water plans in WA are proper statutory plans; not for Ord River, Gnangara/Perth, Harvey, Margaret River, Myalup, Collie, Carnarvon, nowhere! It is scandalous neglect of statutory duties of Ministers for Water and their Departments since 2000.”, Mr Bartholomaeus said.

(Mr Bartholomaeus is a former Director General of the Ministry of Cabinet and Public Sector Management, and CEO of WorkSafe WA.)

MPL have asked the Premier to:

- Restore the rights to water of self-supply water users in the 14 sub-catchments;
- Appoint a statutory Water Resource Management Committee to plan for and manage water allocations in the Warren and Donnelly River areas;
- Prepare a statutory local area management plan for the Warren and Donnelly River catchments; and
- Appoint a Water Resources Council for the State.

(Contact: 97724098, contact@mplwater.com)