

Water Strategies

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Thankyou for meeting with us for the Microsoft teams meeting on Friday afternoon. We found the meeting to have helpful insight into considering our submission.

Firstly, we would like to explain our business background.

We have owned and operated a market garden for the past 30 years in the upper Macquarie basin. During our harvest period from January to June each year, our business produces around 2500 tonnes of cabbage and 100 tonnes of cauliflower. 80% of our product is supplied to two processing factories located in the Sydney region, who then process our product to supply major supermarket chains. The remaining 20% of produce is sent to the Sydney Fresh Markets. Due to the ideal growing conditions during summer in our area we have become the major supplier of cabbage and cauliflower to these factories, for example, in the 2021-2022 harvesting season we were the only supplier to these factories due to the weather events in other growing areas that impacted their ability to produce reliable product.

Our major concerns moving forward into the future is if the cease to pump level is raised to a higher percentage it will significantly reduce the ability to plan for future contract volumes, only allowing us one or two years of supply commitments. We will also lose the ability to pump water from the Fish River, which has proven to be a reliable source during the drought period as it has no impact to the city of Bathurst's water source which allowed us to continue growing our product.

As irrigators we have financially invested large sums to become efficient with our water assets, as we have managed to remain a viable business producing a reliable food source for Australia all while our licence entitlement has not increased. However, as the township of Bathurst is expanding it is putting extra pressure on our water storage facilities and Bathurst Regional Council's solution to the problem is to reduce the irrigators' ability to access water along the Upper Murray Darling Basin, which will jeopardise all farmers futures along this valley. Although this may seem a viable solution to the Bathurst Regional Council this will not only impact the irrigators within the valley, but Australian citizens food supply will be at risk with a major producing valley unable to sustain the future of vegetable production.

As an irrigator what we would like is for NSW Water to control Ben Chifley Dam's water storage which will give clarity on cease to pump levels on the 1st July each year without fluctuation of allocations mid-season once the investment has been made. If fluctuations are made after July 1st by Bathurst Regional Council, which has happened in the past, it will financially jeopardise irrigators in the area as financial commitments have been made to grow product that plans to the cease to pump allocation given on the 1st July each year.

The only solution to this issue is to accommodate water security by having storage solutions increased to maintain the growth of Bathurst and the existing irrigators water licenses.

Thank you for hearing our thoughts on this issue, and we hope you will consider our points when making the new Murray Darling plan.

Kind regards,

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