

Natural Resources Commission review of the Gwydir Regulated River Water Sharing Plan



Photo taken on the Ngamaay (Namoi River) 19 September 2023 by Dharriwaa Elders Group's Senior River Ranger Ernest Sands at location -30.01936 148.12243. It was included in a report sent to environmental water managers, NSW DPI Fisheries and others in DEG's science network. Blooming blue-green algae can clearly be seen. The rivers at Walgett have consistently been a soupy green colour since the 2022 floodwaters receded.

Submission from Dharriwaa Elders Group
Walgett 25 September 2023

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the review of the Water Sharing Plan for the Gwydir Regulated River Water Source 2016.

Dharriwaa Elders Group is an association of Aboriginal Elders who live in Walgett, a river town of about 2,100 people, the majority Aboriginal.

Walgett is where the Baawan (Barwon) and Ngamaay (Namoi) Rivers meet, upstream of the town of Bourke. Walgett is in Gamilaraay Country, close to the borders of Yuwaalaraay, Ngiyambaa and Wayilwan Countries, and is now home to Gamilaraay, Yuwaalaraay, Ngiyambaa and Wayilwan Aboriginal Nations, as well other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

Rivers have always been, and remain central, to Walgett culture and life. Rivers provide drinking water and food (particularly regular fish meals), healing activities, water for birds and animals, gardens and food security. For Aboriginal people the health of the river and the wellbeing of people come first.

In recent times Walgett's Aboriginal community has suffered from drought, climate change and the river drying up. The lack of water and food security is of great concern to Elders. With the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service and our Yuwaya Ngarrali partners UNSW, we have undertaken rigorous research to provide evidence of the extent of our community's water and food insecurity¹ and are in regular correspondence with regular ministers to advocate for solutions².

It's our belief that Walgett's current situation is due to the way water is managed, and that irrigators upstream of Walgett have been favoured, over people downstream. It is a failure of a system that is required by law to manage the rivers in the interests of all Australians.

Dharriwaa Elders Group acknowledges that the Gwydir River Valley lies outside our specific Area of Interest. However, we are concerned that this water sharing plan contributes to the degraded condition of the Baawan-Baaka River and its communities.

In this submission, we address:

- Findings from the Chief Scientist's review into the 2023 Menindee fish deaths
- Floodplain harvesting
- Prioritising extraction above all other water users
- No numeric extraction limit

Chief Scientist's review into 2023 fish deaths at Menindee

Selected recommendations of particular importance to DEG are listed at **Annexure A**.

The Chief Scientist states that:

Our findings and recommendations reflect an understanding of this event as symptomatic of broader degradation to ecosystem health and consequential long-term risks to the Darling-Baaka river system.

The review found that:

¹ https://dharriwaaeldersgroup.org.au/images/downloads/WalgettReport_A130223b_web.pdf

² https://dharriwaaeldersgroup.org.au/images/downloads/130423_MEDIA_RELEASE_Walgett_Water.pdf
<https://dharriwaaeldersgroup.org.au/images/FinalDEGNSWWaterManagementStatementApril2023.pdf>

...explicit environmental protections in water management legislation are neither enforced nor reflected in current policy and operations”, which was found to be the root cause of the environmental degradation and subsequent fish kill.

Our experience reflects findings of the NSW Chief Scientist’s review into the 2023 fish deaths at Menindee, in particular that:

- Trusted voices within specific communities and Aboriginal groups were not engaged. Local and traditional knowledge and experience was rarely used by agencies to inform management actions.
- Changes to flow regimes and fish passage from water infrastructure and altered water use in the Northern Basin are likely key factors in decreasing water quality and the decline of native species, and explicit environmental protections in water management legislation are neither enforced nor reflected in current policy and operations, are the root cause of the environmental degradation and subsequent fish kill.
- The health and wellbeing of the local community is inherently linked to the health of the river. Consecutive mass fish deaths have had a profound, ongoing community impact: social, cultural, mental health, and economic.

Floodplain harvesting

Floodplain harvesting is a significant form of take in the Gwydir valley. DEG made a submission³ to the Select Committee on Floodplain Harvesting (enclosed at **Annexure B**). Selected recommendations of particular importance to DEG are listed at **Annexure C**.

DEG is concerned that floodplain harvesting licences issued, and the associated accounting rules, in the Gwydir valley will:

- allow take to exceed the Murray-Darling Basin Cap,
- be inconsistent with the objects and principles of the Water Management Act (2000),
- Result in a Sustainable Diversion Limit that exceeds the Environmentally Sustainable, and Level of Take and therefore in breach of the Water Act (2007).

Recommendation: Refer to the selected findings and recommendations from the NSW Parliament Select Committee on Floodplain Harvesting attached.

Giving irrigation extractions higher priority than other uses and values of water

Clause 80(1) of the Gwydir Water Sharing Plan states that it may be amended in response to:

- a) the need to protect overland flow for environmental purposes,
- b) monitoring, evaluation and reporting outcomes,
- c) an improved understanding of the influence of floodplain harvesting on downstream flows,
- d) a review that assesses the potential benefits and impacts of new access provisions for floodplain harvesting (regulated river) access licences,
- e) a review of dealing rules in the Water Sharing Plan for the Gwydir Unregulated River Water Sources 2012,
- f) other circumstances as determined by the Minister.

³

<https://dharriwaaeldersgroup.org.au/images/downloads/SubmissiontoFloodplainharvestingInquiry13August2021.pdf>

Clause 80(6) of the Gwydir Water Sharing Plan may also be amended in relation to the end-of-system flow targets at Menindee Lakes.

However, Clause 80 (5) states that:

Actions under subclause (1) or subclause (6) must not substantially alter the long-term average annual total amount of water able to be extracted under floodplain harvesting (regulated river) access licences in the water source.

This clause seems to limit the reduction of floodplain harvesting even if floodplain harvesting is adversely affecting the environment and downstream towns, users and economies.

Clause 79 (4) has a similar provision that states that an action under subclause (2) must not substantially alter the long-term average annual total amount of water able to be extracted under supplementary water access licences.

Therefore, clauses 79(4) and 80 (5) undermine, and are inconsistent with, the water management principles in section 5 of the Water Management Act⁴ and the objectives of the Water Sharing Plan (clauses 8-9, 11-12).

Recommendation: Remove Clauses 79 (4) and 80 (5) from the Water Sharing Plan.

No numeric extraction limit

The Natural Resource Commissioner's review of seven unregulated water sharing plans identified that the plans do not include numeric long-term average extraction limits. The identical circumstance applies to the Gwydir Regulated Water Sharing Plan, which does not have a numeric limit on extractions.

We are concerned that the absence of a concrete number on the limit of take will result in more water being extracted in the Gwydir Valley, which will reduce end-of-system flows and reduce the amount of water in the Baawan-Baaka river system.

Recommendation: Include numeric limits in the Water Sharing Plan.

Conclusion

The compartmentalised, fragmented management and planning of the rivers has allowed the social, ecological and cultural disaster we in Walgett are experiencing, referred to in Finding Four by the Chief Scientist, to unfold. More plans like the Gwydir Regulated River Water Sharing Plan shows us that this disaster will continue. So, there needs to be a completely different approach taken by our elected governments and public servants to stop the carnage, starting with abiding by legislation, and obeying the law.

The Gwydir Regulated River Water Sharing Plan has not contributed beneficially to the people in DEG's Area of Interest – in fact its contribution has been harmful. This harm will be increased by the licensing of large volumes of floodplain harvesting, and prioritising and privileging irrigation above all other uses and values of water and rivers, in particular by limiting the capacity to amend the plan if it is found to be inadequate and removing numeric limits to take.

Because of the fragmentation of water and land management this Plan deals only with water in the Gwydir Valley. It does not deal with land management, especially the big growth of industrial agriculture upstream of Walgett. The harm that this is doing has been pointed out by the Chief Scientist and Engineer, and is observed daily by members of the Walgett community. On the 19th

⁴ <https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2000-092#sec.5>

September 2023 Walgett River Rangers alerted the local community and NSW Government Departments of a concerning bloom of Blue-green Algae in the river at Walgett.

Not only has the Gwydir Water Sharing Plan contributed very little to the community of Walgett, the actions that it enables and encourages have done and continue to do great damage.

Annexure A

Selected findings and recommendations of the Chief Scientist and Engineer's Executive Summary of the review into the 2023 fish deaths at Menindee

Finding Three: Mass fish deaths are symptomatic of degradation of the broader river ecosystem over many years. Changes to flow regime and fish passage from water infrastructure and altered water use in the Northern Basin are likely key factors in decreasing water quality and the decline of native species.

Finding Four: The health and wellbeing of the local community is inherently linked to the health of the river. Consecutive mass fish deaths have had a profound, ongoing community impact: social, cultural, mental health, and economic.

Finding Five: Explicit environmental protections in existing water management legislation are neither enforced nor reflected in current policy and operations. Water policy and operations focus largely on water volume, not water quality. This failure in policy implementation is the root cause of the decline in the river ecosystem and the consequent fish deaths.

Finding 10: Communication of ongoing river operations and during the emergency are/were inconsistent, not timely and did not always consider local/regional accessibility. Trusted voices within specific communities and Aboriginal groups were not engaged. Local and Traditional knowledge and experience was rarely used by agencies to inform management actions.

Finding 11: The local community feel that their knowledge, insights and experience of the river, lakes and broader environment are not given appropriate consideration in water policy, operations, environmental protection, and emergency management.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Regulatory environmental protections must be enforced

The regulatory framework must be upgraded to include legally enforceable obligations and powers to give effect to environmental protections and whole of catchment ecosystem health, as expressed in the objects of water, environmental and biodiversity legislation. Changes should:

- a. draw on scientific, cultural and local community insights and be developed in partnership with these knowledge communities
- b. address risks to the Lower Darling-Baaka and its water-dependent ecosystems
- c. Be informed by an independent review of existing water rights, water accounting systems, exercise of rules and operational parameters, and their impact on riverine catchment health. This includes provisions in Water Sharing Plans to improve water flow across the system
- d. be based on much improved real-time data and monitoring of the whole river system

Recommendation 4: Long-term, ongoing strategies including “coordinated and systemic ecosystem regeneration strategies, inclusion of Aboriginal people’s knowledge, including R&D and scale up of refugia for fish, invertebrate and other species”.

Annexure C

Selected findings and recommendations of the Select Committee on Floodplain Harvesting

Finding 4: That floodplain harvesting has had a significant impact on downstream flows and river health, particularly to the Darling Baaka River, Menindee Lakes and Ramsar listed wetlands, leading to numerous economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts, and that to properly understand any and all impacts improvement in real time monitoring through increased river gauges is required.

Finding 5: That there has been insufficient assessment of the cumulative impacts of floodplain harvesting to date, and that the only way to further improve assessments of the cumulative impacts of floodplain harvesting is through accurate metering of take during floodplain harvesting events.

Finding 6: Floodplain harvesting has contributed to a reduction in downstream flows which has had a profound impact on the culture and traditions of First Nations peoples.

Finding 7: That engagement with First Nations peoples on the development of floodplain harvesting policy has been inadequate and, at times, culturally inappropriate.

Finding 10: That the process the NSW Government is undertaking to amend the Sustainable Diversion Limit as described by the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment has the potential to be unlawful.

Finding 11: That the NSW Government has failed to meet its obligations under the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement by allowing the unchecked growth of unregulated floodplain harvesting extraction to volumes well in excess of the 1994 Murray-Darling Basin Cap.

Recommendation 1: That the NSW Government conduct a thorough review of low and cease-to-flow data, as well as an assessment of downstream economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts and needs prior to finalising the volume of floodplain harvesting entitlements in each valley identified in the NSW Floodplain Harvesting Policy, and this includes detailed locations of any proposed new river gauges and real time monitoring infrastructure.

Recommendation 2: That the NSW Government urgently prioritise regular and genuine involvement of First Nations peoples in the management of floodplain harvesting, including cultural flows.

Recommendation 3: That the NSW Government's modelling of floodplain harvesting volumes use the best available projections to evaluate the impact of climate change on entitlement reliability, downstream outcomes and environmental impacts.

Recommendation 4: That the NSW Government establish an independent expert panel coordinated by the Natural Resources Commission to:

- assess and accredit the models used in Water Sharing Plans and produce a public report on the accreditation that includes the standard and mean error of models
- assess the floodplain harvesting 'Cap Scenario' reports for compliance with the Murray-Darling Basin Cap and publish assessment reports
- Annually audit the Sustainable Diversion Limit and Murray-Darling Basin Plan Limit, publishing audit reports that separately identifies the annual Cap or Sustainable Diversion Limit target, and diversions for licence and extraction type.

Recommendation 5: That the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment ensure that model run number and long-term average extraction limits for the Baseline Diversion Limit, the Murray-Darling Basin Cap, and the Plan Limits must be included in water sharing plans for each valley.

Recommendation 6: That, if the NSW Government intends to amend the Sustainable Diversion Limits, the NSW Government must specify the legal pathway through which they intend to do so.

Recommendation 7: That the NSW Government ensure that any allocation of floodplain harvesting volumes and entitlements must be within existing Sustainable Diversion Limits.

Recommendation 9: That the NSW Government urgently ensure all floodplain harvesting is metered and measured, including flows that enter and bypass storages, before issuing floodplain harvesting licences to ensure the accuracy of volumes and long-term extraction limits.

Recommendation 17: That the NSW Government develop clearly defined and enforceable access rules based on within-valley and downstream flow triggers based on minimum flow targets needed to maintain or improve outcomes for environmental, cultural and basic landholder requirements, with floodplain harvesting take only permitted under the access rules when these targets are met, and that these access rules must be implemented before any floodplain harvesting licences or entitlements are allocated.

Recommendation 18: That the NSW Government work urgently to engage First Nations communities to ensure that cultural flow targets are established and met as part of the regulatory framework on floodplain harvesting.

Dharriwaa Elders Group Incorporated

Submission to NSW Parliament Legislative Council Select Committee on Floodplain Harvesting

13 August 2021



Photo taken September 2019 of the dry Namoi River at Walgett's then intake pump for its drinking water, Walgett golf course. The proof of poor water management during drought.

Inquiry into NSW Government's management of Floodplain Harvesting

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. That a select committee be established to inquire into and report on the Government's management of floodplain harvesting, including:
 - (a) the legality of floodplain harvesting practices,
 - (b) the water regulations published on 30 April 2021
 - (c) how floodplain harvesting can be licensed, regulated, metered and monitored so that it is sustainable and meets the objectives of the Water Management Act 2000 and the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and,
 - (d) any other related matter.

The Dharriwaa Elders Group

The Dharriwaa Elders Group, an incorporated association of Walgett Aboriginal Elders operating since 1999, thanks the Select Committee and all those who voted for the Inquiry. Evidence of unlawful water management and use must be brought to the attention of the NSW public so that the NSW Government and its agencies can be brought to account.

Walgett is where the Baawan (Barwon) and Ngamaay (Namoi) Rivers meet, upstream of the towns of Brewarrina and Bourke. The Baawan and Ngamaay Rivers are part of the Northern Murray-Darling (Baaka) Basin. Walgett is in Gamilaraay Country, close to the borders of Ngiyambaa and Wayilwan Countries, and is now home to Gamilaraay, Yuwaalaraay, Ngiyambaa and Wayilwan Aboriginal Nations, as well other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

Walgett's climate is semi-arid, with mild winters and very hot summers. The Country is a floodplain rich with rivers, ephemeral streams and lakes. Groundwaters come from alluvial reservoirs and the deep Great Artesian Basin. Surface and groundwaters are the lifeblood of the Country, and once provided plentiful resources that supported thriving cultural lives.

Values and ethos of the Dharriwaa Elders Group (DEG) in relation to land and water management

The floodplains are complex systems of creeks, lakes, warrambuls, groundwaters, rivers and the rich black soil. Rivers aren't separate from the floodplain – they are one element of it. Water in the land is vital for our daily life; for food, drinking water and the deep history of the community in stories. No-one should take more than they need. This excludes all external parties such as water traders and speculators.

DEG supports the Objects¹ and Principles² of the NSW *Water Management Act 2000* and the Commonwealth *Water Act 2007*³ and is horrified to witness daily that they are being ignored. How can we think otherwise? We see what we see with our own eyes and taste the salty water from the groundwater we are forced to drink when the rivers are dry. Our nutrition suffers because we have

¹ <https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2000-092#sec.3>

² <https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2000-092#ch.2>

³ <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/water/policy/legislation>

lost our regular fish and river foods, and our wellbeing suffers when we can no longer revive our spirits down on the riverbanks.

Response to the Inquiry Terms of Reference

(a) the legality of floodplain harvesting practices

It is DEG's view is that floodplain harvesting is not legal in NSW. DEG is concerned that licensing the volumes proposed will:

- exceed the Murray-Darling Basin Cap,
- be inconsistent with the Objects and Principals of the *NSW Water Management Act 2000*; and
- result in a sustainable diversion limit that exceeds the environmentally sustainable level of take and be in breach of the *Water Act 2007*.

DEG is concerned about the legality of many of the structures associated with the interception and storage of water for floodplain harvesting.

When the river was dry at Walgett for so long in 2018 and 2019, we suspected that water was being taken illegally upstream. We saw storages being filled and we knew that something was wrong. We saw water on farms between Walgett and Wee Waa, Narrabri, Moree and Mungindi.

We felt that NSW DPIE was putting irrigators before the needs of the river and its people. We were not surprised to read, in the findings of the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption, that the needs of irrigation were being put before the needs of everyone else.

The NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption released its report, *Investigation into complaints of corruption in the management of water in NSW and systemic non-compliance with the Water Management Act 2000*, in November 2020.

The Commission found instances where the *department's decisions and approach were manifestly partial towards irrigators and industry*.

The Commission formed the opinion that...the rights of productive water users [sic] were given priority over the rights of other stakeholders and that there was a clear alignment between the department's strategies and goals and those of the irrigation industry.

The Water Management Act 2000 is clear about firstly providing for the environment and secondly recognising basic landholder rights above other uses. These water sharing principles are found in section 5(3) of the Water Management Act 2000. It states that:

- a) sharing of water from a water source must protect the water source and its dependent ecosystems, and*
- b) sharing of water from a water source must protect basic landholder rights, and*
- c) sharing or extraction of water under any other right must not prejudice the principles set out in paragraphs (a) and (b).*

Further, section 9(1) of the Act provides that "It is the duty of all persons exercising functions under this Act:

- a) *to take all reasonable steps to do so in accordance with, and so as to promote, the water management principles of this Act, and*
- b) *as between the principles for water sharing set out in section 5(3), to give priority to those principles in the order in which they are set out in that subsection.*⁴

(b) the water regulations published on 30 April 2021

DEG was shocked by the tactic of introducing these regulations, using Parliamentary processes to give greater advantages to floodplain water harvesters in the Northern Basin. This makes us fearful of the way the NSW Government is trying to use Parliamentary processes.

We are pleased that the regulations published on 30 April 2021 were disallowed. We thank the vigilance of all those who worked to help protect our interests and the interests of the river, especially Cate Faerhmann and Justin Field. We are nevertheless concerned that we must remain alert. We agree with another conclusion in the ICAC report, that this behaviour by the NSW Government has:

*...had a detrimental effect on the public's confidence in the ecologically sustainable, equitable, transparent and efficient management of the water sources of the state and in the integrity and good repute of public administration...*⁵

The DEG believes that water management in NSW is unjust in the way that it places unequal burdens on communities such as Walgett.

(c) how floodplain harvesting can be licensed, regulated, metered and monitored so that it is sustainable and meets the objectives of the Water Management Act 2000 and the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and,

DEG does not agree with, and does not want, any floodplain harvesting. We don't believe that floodplain harvesting can be sustainable. Floodplain harvesting is, by definition, taking water from the ecosystems of the floodplains. It is not spare, unused or wasted water.

It goes against our understanding of the rivers and our lives that water can be taken this way. Our communities and ancestors are part of those ecosystems. We still find it hard to believe that this water can be taken from so many people for the benefit of so few. We don't understand this continuing colonisation of Country.

As a starting point for all water management DEG believes that:

1. All water use must be licensed and managed within legal limits.
2. The location, storage volume and contribution to diversions of all permanent and 'temporary' structures on floodplains must be identified and published.
3. All structures on floodplains, and their ownership, license conditions and approvals, must be included in the NSW Water Register.
4. Information regarding the number of unlawful structures and their location must be available to the public.

⁴ NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption, 2020. *Investigation into complaints of corruption in the management of water in NSW and systemic non-compliance with the Water Management Act 2000*, NSW ICAC, Sydney.

<https://www.icac.nsw.gov.au/investigations/past-investigations/2020/nsw-government>

⁵ *Ibid.*

5. Dates when all unlawful structures will be removed must be provided to the public.
6. A comprehensive Basin-wide water accounting framework must be developed.
7. The effects of climate change on river flows must be analysed and shared with communities.
8. All license conditions and water sharing plan rules must include downstream flow targets, stipulating the volume of water to pass defined points.
9. Local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations must be a central part of decision-making (consistent with internationally recognised Indigenous rights), rather than merely being 'consulted' after a policy and legal framework has been developed
10. Allocation of water must be made to Aboriginal communities with the method to be determined by Aboriginal people.
11. There must be greater penalties for non-compliance with water laws, including conditions and rules governing diversions from floodplains, to a level sufficient to serve as a deterrent to unlawful behaviour.

(d) any other related matter.

Since the early 1990s the NSW and Commonwealth governments have recognised floodplain water harvesting as a threat to the environment, downstream license holders, town water supplies, and communities. Governments have repeatedly pointed out that floodplain water harvesting should be licensed and measured, and the law enforced. Despite this, the statement below, in policy advice to River Management Committees (circa 2003), still applies.

The Water Act 1912 provided powers to license floodplain harvesting. However, this was never applied...Harvested floodplain water has been treated as a freely available bonus to a farmer's licensed entitlement.⁶

Matters of concern to DEG include:

- the poor quality of the hydrological models used in the Northern Basin.
- damage to the environment caused by the diversion of large volumes of water from floodplains,
- damage to the cultural values of floodplains, rivers and wetlands caused by floodplain harvesting.

DEG considers the following proposals for licensing floodplain harvesting particularly objectionable:

- an initial licence allocation of five times the licensed amount,
- accounts holding five times the face value of the licence at any time,
- trade of floodplain harvesting licences, and
- that environmental flows are not protected from take by floodplain harvesting.

DEG disputes the misleading and deceptive use of the term 'carryover' in relation to floodplain harvesting. The term has been adopted from regulated systems where it is applied to accounts with water held over from previous allocations from large public dams.

⁶ NSW Government (n.d. circa 2003). *Advice to Water Management Committees, No. 3 Floodplain Harvesting.*

It does not apply to floodplain harvesting as it is not carryover of unused water. It is a claim to take future river flows. In practice it will mean that the river will owe water to irrigators even when it has not flowed, or it doesn't flow enough to meet the demands of the irrigation industry, even if that lack of flow is caused by irrigation upstream.

Claiming the right to take future flows is inconsistent with the Principles of the *NSW Water Management Act 2000*, which places the needs of the river, and communities along the river, ahead of take by irrigation.

Consultation

The poor quality of consultation with Aboriginal communities in its area of concern is unacceptable to DEG. Community consultation is difficult and traumatising, and above all, time wasting. It has provided almost no information of use to an ordinary member of the community, despite the wasteful travel budgets incurred by departmental staff visiting us.

Despite the many years during which the NSW Government could have negotiated the proposals for floodplain harvesting, and what they mean for the river and communities, it has failed to do so.

DEG wants negotiation, not consultation. We refuse to let our time be wasted by expensive and seemingly cynical tick-the-box exercises that use our organisation's profile for dishonest purposes.

"Dishonesty and lies breed too much confusion – which opens the floodgates for more confusion and lies"⁷.

Conclusion

DEG wants clear, indisputable guidelines for water management. This is why DEG is preparing its Healthy Rivers plan which will describe the outcomes it requires for the management of water in its area of interest.

The condition of the river affects every part of life in the Walgett community. It affects water quality, drinking water, food security, social cohesion and wellbeing. Attached are links to other work that DEG has done over many years. This work is needed because of the poor management of water in the Murray-Darling Basin. We are forced to do this as a local leadership group because of the failings of governments.

We want this Inquiry into floodplain harvesting to provide clarity for the voters of NSW so they can see what is really happening and what needs to be done to manage water for the wellbeing of people and Country.

Attachments: Other recent work by Dharriwaa Elders Group

- Submission responding to a call by the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment for input to a report on "Too Dirty, Too Little, Too Much: The Global Water Crisis and Human Rights" - Joint Submission by DEG, MLDRN and EDO November 2020.

<https://dharriwaaeldersgroup.org.au/images/downloads/Submission-to-UN-Special-Rapporteur-on-Human-Rights-and-the-Environment-101120.pdf>

⁷ Virginia Robinson DEG Secretary 30 July 2021

- Inquiry into food prices and food security in remote Indigenous communities - A submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs from Dharriwaa Elders Group and Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service 15 July 2020.

<https://www.dharriwaaeldersgroup.org.au/images/downloads/FinalSubmissionDEGandWAMS15July2020.pdf>

- Recommendations for the Review of the National Water Initiative. A submission to the Productivity Commission Review of the National Water Initiative from Dharriwaa Elders Group and Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service 11 September 2020

https://dharriwaaeldersgroup.org.au/images/downloads/Productivity_Commission_Submission_-_SEPTEMBER_2020.pdf