



Birding NSW Inc

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The Hon Melinda Pavey MP
Minister for Water
Parliament House
Macquarie St Sydney NSW 2000

7 July 2019.

Dear Minister Pavey,

RE: Water resources in the Murray-Darling Basin in NSW.

May we congratulate you and your party on retaining Government in NSW and thus providing the people with some hope for stability and continuity of management of the vital water supply in the Murray-Darling Basin.

Given that the Murray-Darling river systems were absolutely full of water by mid 2017 (flooding rains across NSW with record numbers of bird species nesting in colonies during the 2016-17 summer season), our members are now aghast at the condition of places such as the Macquarie Marshes in Northern NSW. One member has reported to me to express his deep concern for the wetlands which now appear to be dying. Ancient River Red Gums are stressed and there is only a fraction of the birdlife one could observe only two years ago. Paddocks are bare and farms have been de-stocked.

The timing may be right to investigate what has happened over the last two years to bring about such a rapid change in the water supply to the river systems. We are aware of the great demand on the available water for humans, agriculture and the environment and so, wonder if allocations are what they should or could be in the light of this recent experience.

May we investigate, with you, the actual usage of water over the past two years:

- How has water been allocated since the last floods? What proportions have gone to major users?
- Is there any water stored in reserve by any agricultural interests?
- Will your Government work with scientists to continue to understand how groundwater works and what the reserves in aquifers might be now?
- For the future, can you advise if your Government will evaluate the range of crops grown in NSW and whether, given limited water supplies, some should be banned?

The 400 members of Birding NSW will await with interest your report on the situation and what will be done to improve the health of our natural resources.

Sincerely

Ian G Bailey
Office of Conservation
Birding NSW
CC The Hon Matt Kean MP, Minister for the Environment.