

Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2022

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SUBMISSION TO THE STATE DEVELOPMENT AND
REGIONAL INDUSTRIES COMMITTEE
ON
THE WATER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2022

SUBMISSION DUE BY 1PM THURSDAY NOVEMBER 10TH 2022

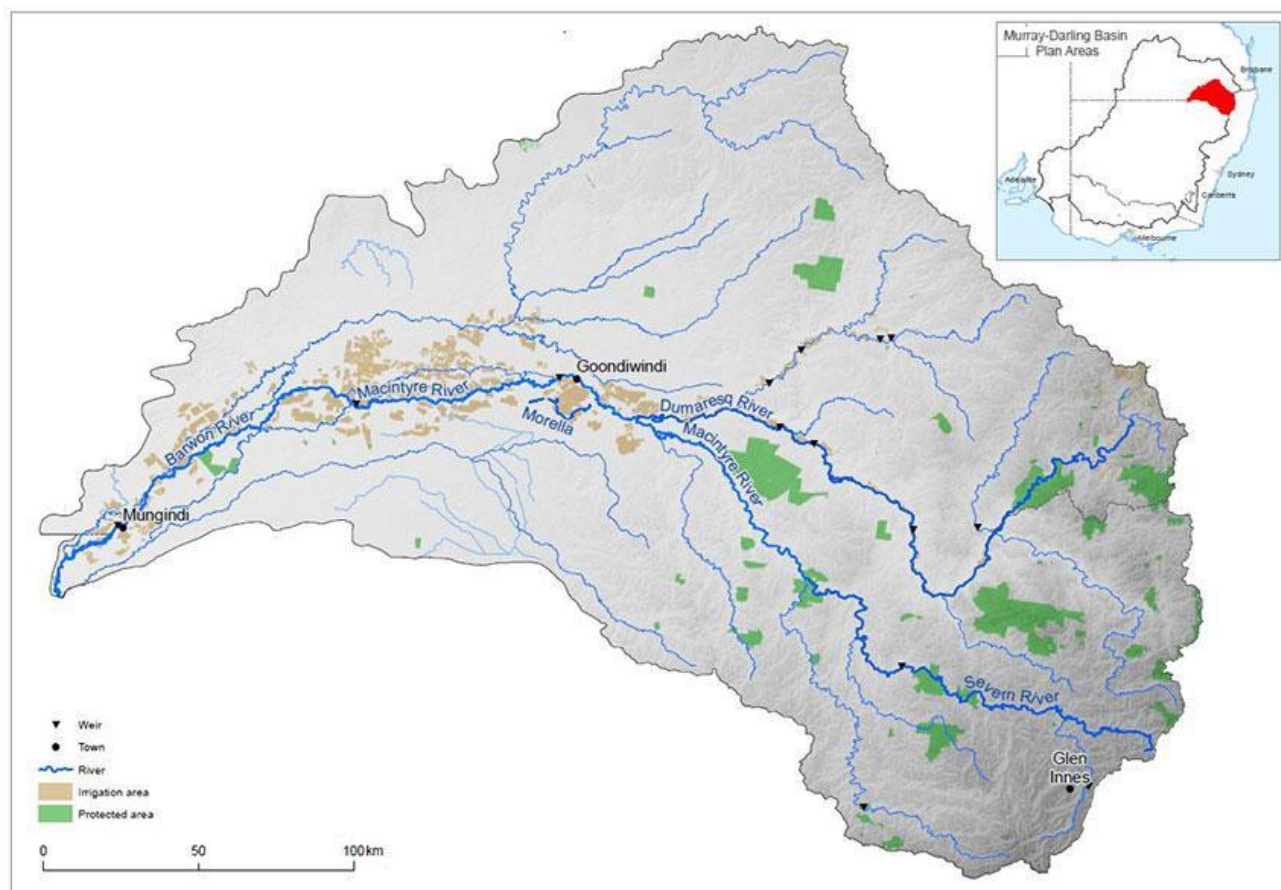
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INTRODUCTION

Border Rivers Food and Fibre (BRFF) represents the water users and entitlement-holders of the Border Rivers region of southern Queensland and northern New South Wales. These water-users responsibly utilise the water resources of the Macintyre Brook, the Dumaresq, Macintyre, Severn, Weir and Barwon River systems and the Eastern Recharge Zone of the Great Artesian Basin. Production from irrigated agriculture includes vegetables, nuts, dairy, citrus, wine-grapes, herbs, stone-fruit, hay, cereals, coarse grains and cotton. Irrigated agriculture contributes nearly \$1 Billion (farm gate) to the local economy in good years.

The catchment area of 49,500 km² makes up 4% of the Murray Darling Basin and it comprises 5% of the total basin water resources.



This document represents the views of the members of BRFF, though individuals are entitled to their own views relating to their own circumstances.

RESPONSE

BRFF understands that the primary objective of the Bill is to amend the *Water Act 2000* to establish a regulatory framework for implementing Queensland's strengthened policy for measuring the take of non-urban water.

It appears that the broad impact of this Bill will be given effect through subsidiary regulation which is yet to be introduced or amended. Therefore, whilst BRFF is broadly supportive of the bills objectives, it will be vital that subsequent regulations are subject to appropriate consultation with industry.

As BRFF represents irrigators in both New South Wales (NSW) and Queensland, we have unique insight into measurement policy given NSW is some years ahead of the Queensland process. Whilst there is merit to having harmonised requirements I think in this case Queensland should consider the considerable learnings available.

With this experience we would highlight some risks to the current implementation plan in the practical deliverability of metering in the proposed timeframes. In NSW experience there aren't physically enough approved meters available to the market to be installed, with a significant number on long-term back order in NSW before we add this new Queensland demand. There is also a shortage of qualified people to instal what meters become available. Due to the ongoing flooding there are also physical constraints to the access to pump sites to install meters.

We would also flag a risk to the telemetry requirement. In NSW we have experienced seen that telemetry won't work in some locations because there isn't connection to telecommunications required. A straight forward exemption process should be instituted as part of any policy.

Overland flow measurement, called Flood Plain Harvesting in NSW, has been a matter of significant concern in NSW as their requirements are practically impossible. This Queensland approach which enables individual measurement plans would appear to be sensible.

BRFF looks forward to working with the Department as the subsidiary regulations are developed or amended.

We would be pleased to provide the Committee with any further information it may require.