

MEDIA RELEASE

DATE: 8 November 2017



XENOPHON & SHARKIE TO MEET WITH LANDHOLDERS AS COORONG WATER SECURITY PRESSURE BUILDS



Above: Cattle producer Gerard Van Den Brink explaining on farm desalination to Rebekha Sharkie MP (Federal Member for Mayo), Vincent Cammell, Mayor Neville Jaensch, and Kelly Gladigau (SA-Best candidate for Hammond).

Landholders affected by crippling water prices in the Coorong and Tatiara districts are being called to a public meeting this month to mount pressure on State and Federal governments.

SA-Best party leader Nick Xenophon and Federal Spokesperson for Agriculture and Rural Affairs Rebekha Sharkie will both be in attendance to hear first-hand how a lack of water price security in the region is impacting on the livestock industry in particular.

Landholders are urged to come along to this public meeting to express the true impact of water costs on their businesses, and share their thoughts on what can be done to address the issue.

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“Every district in South Australia has different water challenges but more than anywhere else in SA, I was struck by the unsustainable costs of farming in the Coorong and Tatiara region due to the prohibitive cost of water,” Ms Sharkie said.

“We’re not talking about irrigating pasture. We’re talking about filling up stock troughs to keep animals alive.

“If we didn’t have such high livestock prices at the moment, we would find we wouldn’t have a cow or even a lamb between Murray Bridge and Keith and that is unacceptable.”

The Coorong Water Security Advisory Group and Coorong District Council have turned to campaigning Members of Parliament for answers, after it was recently revealed efforts to work with SA Water on a solution had come to a dead end.

The Council had hoped to further improve water security by establishing third party access to SA Water’s infrastructure, and secure cheaper reticulated water for landholders within the region via by the Tailem Bend to Keith pipeline network. However, SA Water have deemed this approach unviable.

Despite this, Coorong District Council Chief Executive Officer Vincent Cammell said this meeting was just one way in which Council was continuing to work with the livestock industry to find long-term solutions and drive discussion.

“This issue affects our entire agricultural industry and if we want to continue to see world-class produce coming out of the Coorong region, we need to have all levels of Government working together.”

The Livestock Water Security public meeting will be held at the Coonalpyn Town Hall on Thursday, 16 November 2017 at 7:00pm.

- ENDS -

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See below for Livestock Producer Case Study

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CASE STUDY: Water cost squeeze at Woods Well – now \$3.30 per kilolitre!

Adam Merry is the owner / manager of 'Warreena', a 2,400ha grazing property at Woods Well. Adam runs a mixed enterprise of sheep and cattle consisting of 300 Angus cattle and 2,300 cross bred ewes. When he received his latest SA Water bill this week, he saw another cost increase to \$3.30 per kilolitre from \$3.24.



Above: Adam Merry at Warreena

“The price of mains water was \$1 per kilolitre when we purchased this property in 2000. Although this was the sole water source on the property, this was a viable price for livestock production and influenced our decision to buy at the time. Since then the mains water price has gone up 300%. My water bill today shows the price has now increased to \$3.30 per k/L since the start of July 2017.”

Adam added, “The price blow out has meant we have had to change our enterprise mix from pure cattle to now more sheep due to their lower water consumption. While running just cattle the annual water bill was around \$60,000, since reducing cattle numbers and increasing sheep numbers the cost is now around \$40,000.”

On farm water leaks also put pressure on landholders, even if they have installed leak detection technology.

“When you can't find a leak, you know you are wasting money for every hour you can't find it,” Adam said.

“As the Coorong Water Transportation Scheme has not gone ahead with SA Water we have investigated various options to secure our on farm water security. We have explored options such as a pipeline from Lake Albert or Tintinara, a lined water catchment, or even on-farm desalination.

“The common sense approach would be a reduction in the SA Water pricing to reduce duplication of pipeline assets.

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“It would be great to have access to grants and interest free loans to allow producers in our area to put in place solutions that best suit our farming operations. It seems that River Murray irrigators have received plenty of government support over the last decade or so. We are also keen to save Murray water so it would be ideal to receive some financial support to open up our options.

“Another potential solution would be to establishment a water cost rebate system similar to the primary producer diesel rebate.”

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