



SENATOR DAVID POCOCK
Senator for the ACT

MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW HOPE FOR THE MURRUMBIDGEE IN WATER AGREEMENT

There is new hope of restoring the health of the once mighty Murrumbidgee river under the terms of an agreement reached with the Albanese Government and ACT Independent Senator David Pocock.

For almost a year now, Senator Pocock has been engaging with stakeholders and basin communities. He has visited communities in Deniliquin, Macquarie Marshes and Menindee Lakes and held multiple roundtables with farmers, irrigators, First Nations groups and environmentalists.

This wide-ranging consultation on the complex and difficult issues surrounding the management of the Murray-Darling Basin and associated issues has helped inform his consideration of the Water Amendment (Restoring Our Rivers) Bill 2023.

Senator Pocock said that while imperfect, the legislation seeks to strike a balance between the needs of all water users while maintaining the long-term health of the rivers until a new basin plan can be developed.

“A critical part of striking the right balance for my community is including the Upper Murrumbidgee, increasing flows over time and meeting both environmental and human water needs,” Senator Pocock said.

“While Minister Plibersek wasn’t able to fully meet my request to guarantee an increase in flows by 21%, she has committed to setting aside \$30m in the contingency reserve that can be drawn upon to support additional water in the Upper Murrumbidgee during drought like conditions.

“This agreement will also see an additional \$20m go towards the catchment health of the Upper Murrumbidgee as well as science and monitoring of the river’s health. This data will provide critical inputs to a review of the Snowy Water Inquiry Outcomes Implementation Deed (SWIOID) that the government has agreed to seek.

“The government is also proposing to expand the terms of reference for the SWIOID review to include adequate end of system flows at Lobbs Hole in the ACT, in consideration of short-term drought risks. Additional funding of \$500,000 will support First Nations



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participation in the SWIOLD review and it will examine options to upgrade the Tantangara outlet.”

Throughout the extensive negotiations with government the Snowy Hydro Board also agreed to a Statement of Posture to recognise its role in managing water to meet environmental, social and cultural needs alongside renewable energy production. This will be included in the government’s Statement of Expectations for Snowy Hydro, expected to be updated next year. An immediate change is that Snowy Water and NSW will work together on water releases that are based more adaptively on temperature cues to get improved outcomes for fish and river ecology. Snowy Hydro will also commit to “supporting adaptive management approaches and best practice management to pursue a high standard of social, cultural and environmental outcomes.

“I welcome the commitment from Snowy Hydro to work in good faith with governments and stakeholders to seek the best possible outcomes for all water users.

“Technical changes like clarifying that the Murray Darling Basin Plan applies to the Upper Murrumbidgee and publishing reporting on water flows, water temperatures and the inclusion of an Upper Murrumbidgee hydrological indicator site will increase transparency.

“I am now satisfied that supporting this legislation will deliver tangible results to the health of the basin, its rivers and the communities they support over the long term. We have to be looking at the long term health and resilience of the basin as we head into uncharted territory when it comes to climate and rainfall variability”

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