

Benalla farmers worried about future water security

One hundred and forty water users on the Broken System attended a meeting in Benalla last night to discuss the implications of the State Government's decision to Decommission Lake Mokoan.

Broken System Reliability Reference Committee (BSRRC)Chairman, Ray Henderson, said the overwhelming majority of water users in the area were represented at the meeting.

"The high turnout reflects their concern that without Lake Mokoan they will face reoccurring water shortages," Mr Henderson said.

Mr Henderson said the BSRRC and the Victorian Farmers Federation have been negotiating with the Government and Goulburn Murray Water over the estimate of the reliability of water supply and after 12 months have finally reached an impasse.

"The Government has guaranteed the reliability of supply will be maintained by a series of so called offset measure, but the Department of Sustainability and Environment argues the current reliability is only 91 percent, meaning irrigators should only expect to get full water right 91 years in every 100," Mr Henderson said.

"Not surprisingly the meeting rejected the DSE's estimate of current reliability as totally inadequate, but endorsed the BSRRC's recommendation to continue negotiations both on the level of current reliability and offset measures that will be needed to prevent the region suffering chronic water shortages in the future when Lake Mokoan is decommissioned.

"Irrigators on the system believe the Broken system with Lake Mokoan is a very reliable water supply delivering water right at least 97 years in every 100."

Mr Henderson said BSRRC representatives met with Victorian Minister for Water, John Thwaites, on Wednesday night and although no agreement was reached on the estimate of current reliability, Minister Thwaites told irrigators he would keep "an open mind on the issue."

The BSRRC will report back to Broken System water users by the end of November 2005.

Media Contact

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