



Media Release



Monday, March 23, 2015

Call to back community recommendations on drain funding

Livestock SA is calling on the State Government to support recommendations identified by the South East Drainage Community Panel and honour its commitment to the region's residents that the community will direct how maintenance of the network will be funded.

The panel – funded by landholders through the NRM levy and the South East NRM Board – delivered its findings last week, including that the government should fund drain maintenance through better annual budgeting and without adding levies or increasing existing taxes.

In announcing the panel's progress in October 2014, Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation Ian Hunter said "a community panel was chosen as the best method to seek community input on funding options to maintain the extensive drainage and bridge network". He also said he was "confident that fair and equitable solutions will be found".

Livestock SA vice-president Jack England said given the government's strong desire for the funding solution to be community-driven, it now needed to honour the findings which the panel had delivered, or risk making the entire community engagement process look like a charade.

"The community appreciates the government's foresight in taking up the conversation about future maintenance of the system but the panel has given the South East region's clear view that the entire state benefits from this infrastructure and so the government should pay," he said.

"With the time and effort put in by the jury, presenters, the public via written submissions and New Democracy, all must be applauded for their professionalism. It was an exhaustive and expensive process that delved through the history of the drainage scheme pooling and summarising years of knowledge and information.

"It would be disrespectful and grossly unfair for Minister Hunter to not abide by the community's recommendations for future funding and also that the State Government to reinstate drain maintenance funding cuts it made over the past decade."

Mr England said the government's cuts only highlighted its inability to adequately maintain a vital piece of infrastructure that underpinned the state's economy.

"These cuts have allowed the drainage system to gradually degrade and a capital injection is now required to lift the government-owned infrastructure to an adequate and safe operating level."

Livestock SA encourages community members to attend Mr Hunter's meeting at Naracoorte at 11.30am this Saturday to discuss the issue. More information at:

www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/southeast/projects/community-panel/Community-Panel-recommendations

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For media interviews: Jack England, Livestock SA vice-president, 08 8767 5071. (Mobile coverage is limited. Please leave a message for Jack to return your call.)