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Lachlan Valley Water Inc

Sustainable, productive and efficient water use in the Lachlan Valley

Media Release

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“Extreme Disappointment at Wyangala Dam Wall Announcement”

Towns and communities in the state’s Central West now face greater risks from droughts and floods, after the NSW Government Water Minister Rose Jackson announced Labor would not proceed with an upgrade of Wyangala Dam near Cowra.

“It’s disappointing on many levels,” said Lachlan Valley Water Inc Executive Officer, Glenn Daley.

“After two decades of floods and drought, I’d have thought supporting a project that provided both flood mitigation and better water security for the region would have been a no-brainer. It’s further disappointing that the Minister made the announcement direct to media without consulting industry.

“Raising the dam wall would have protected towns and farms from the kind of devastating floods experienced in the last 12 months and ensured town water security in the next drought. It would have also given greater water security to our agriculture sector which is a vital economic contributor to our local economy.”

Mr Daley said Lachlan Valley Water had written to the Water Minister back in August requesting an update on the project, however had yet to receive a response from the Minister’s office.

The announcement comes just weeks after Federal Minister Tanya Plibersek announced proposed changes to the Murray Darling Basin Plan that included buybacks to secure water for the environment, and just days before the NSW Mini Budget.

“By walking away from this project the NSW Government has abandoned our communities. The State and Federal Governments need to think hard about what is going to happen out here next time there is a drought or a flood and what they could have done to prevent that from happening.”

Tom Green, Chairman of Lachlan Valley also expressed his disappointment in the announcement.

“On one hand you have the Federal Government willing to spend billions on water buybacks, further weakening rural and regional communities that are already doing it tough, and on the other hand you have the State Government unwilling to spend money to ensure their survival; it’s just political city-centric thinking,” Mr Green said.

Ed Fagan, Cowra agricultural producer and Chairman of the WaterNSW Customer Advisory Group for Lachlan says its an opportunity lost.

“When you consider the damage costs from the recent floods, and what looks like the next drought on the horizon, the government has lost a real opportunity to provide better security to the Lachlan Catchment for many years to come. We’re now forced to look at other options which will be costly to agricultural producers in order to provide better water security for our towns and communities,” Mr Fagan said.

The project was to have raised the dam wall by some 10 metres, adding 53% storage capacity of some 650GL while also providing flood mitigation capability. It was to be jointly funded by Federal and State Governments, however the Federal Budget announced earlier this year didn’t include any funding for the project. A dam safety upgrade was identified as necessary in 2018 and was understood to be included in the wall raising project.

For more information contact Lachlan Valley Water Executive Officer, Glenn Daley on 0411 447 025, or email eo@lvw.com.au

Lachlan Valley Water (LVW) is the valley-based industry organisation representing surface water and groundwater users in the Lachlan and Belubula valleys. Our members include irrigators, stock and domestic water users, other industries including mining, landholders exercising basic land rights and all categories of licences except for those held by environmental water managers.