



Monday, 31 March 2014

Heavy fines imposed on Hillston irrigator who took water without a meter

The NSW Office of Water today welcomed the conviction and fine imposed on a Hillston irrigator in the Griffith Local Court in earlier this month.

Magistrate McAnulty found the irrigator guilty of the 8 separate charges brought against him by the NSW Government, imposing fines of \$32,000 and costs of \$26,000.

In his comments he noted that “Parliament intended that the fines for breaches of the *Water Management Act 2000* be significant” and “a significant fine would be ordered to deter others.”

The licence holder had taken water without a functioning water meter over a period of many months in 2011.

NSW Water Commissioner, David Harriss, said that this deliberate action had the potential to impact on local water users including town water supply and the environment, by reducing the volume of water available in the Hillston area.

Mr Harriss said that this action occurred during the worst drought on record; when surface water allocations were very low.

“When a licence is issued it’s a matter of trust for holders to comply with the conditions of the licence, and that includes metering the water used.”

“The ruling shows that the community will no longer tolerate illegal water-related activities in New South Wales.”

Mr Harriss said the NSW Office of Water is committed to managing and protecting the State’s water resources in a fair and sensible manner, and will not hesitate to take the appropriate action if people have broken the law including prosecution which could result in substantial fines or even gaol terms.

Under the relevant legislation, the maximum penalty for a corporation for this offence is \$1.1 million and for an individual \$247,500.

“The NSW Office of Water takes all allegations of water breaches seriously and will not hesitate to bring cases to court when warranted,” Mr Harriss said.

Anyone wishing to report suspected illegal water activities can do so confidentially on **1800 633 362** or by emailing **watercompliance@water.nsw.gov.au**

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