

24-05-2016

## Greens visit dry Darling River and promise to push for Murray-Darling Basin Plan reform and irrigation licences

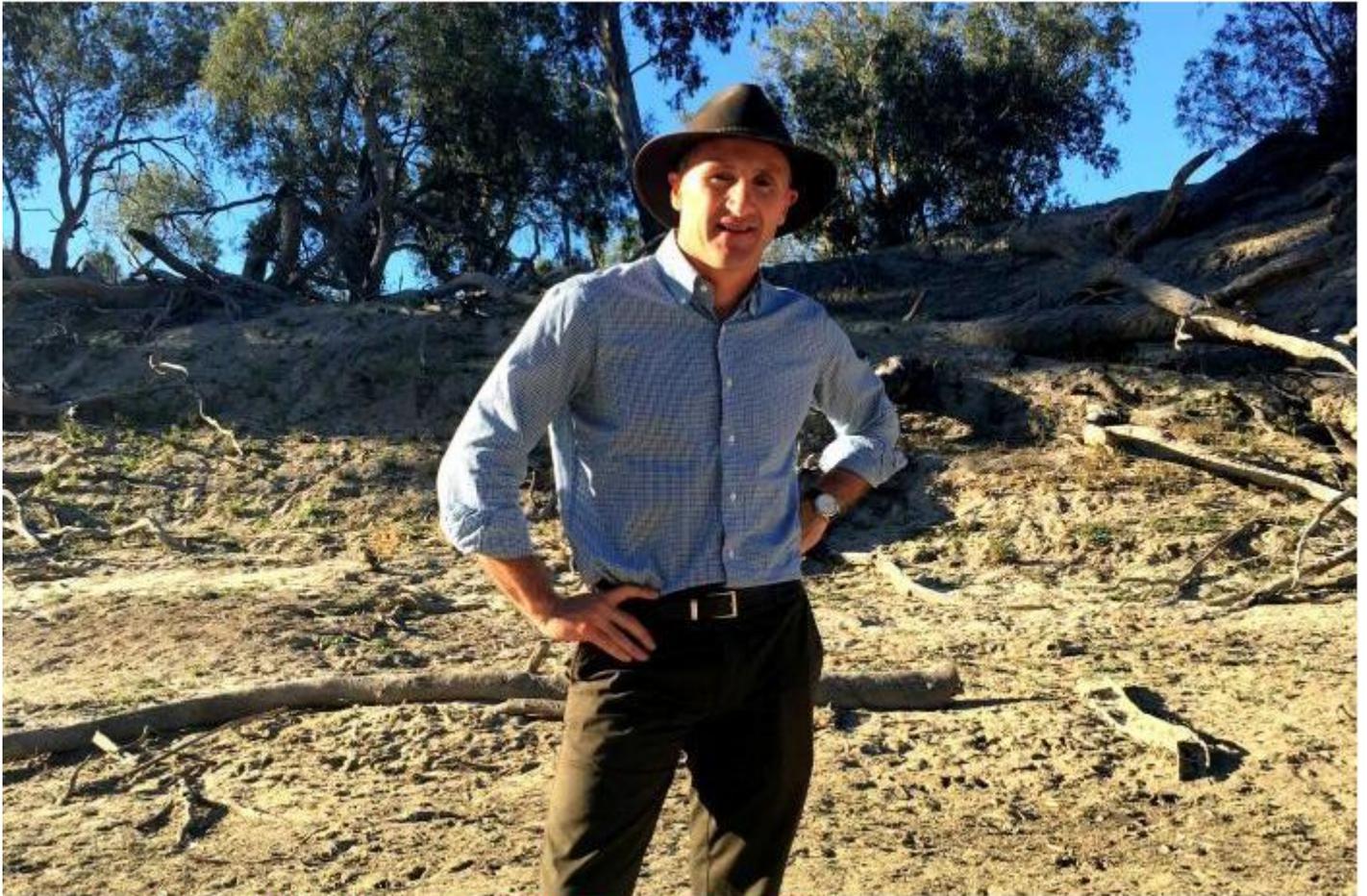


PHOTO: Senator Richard Di Natale stands on the bed of the lower Darling River. (ABC Rural: Emma Brown)

The Greens have taken their campaign to the bush as farmers in south-west New South Wales prove the lower Darling River is so dry you can cook a lamb chop on it.

Farmers from Pooncarie and Menindee shared their concerns around the river with Senator Richard Di Natale over a barbecue on the bed of the Darling River.

Senator Di Natale said the Greens had always supported sustainable agriculture and they would push for reform of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan when it was reviewed.

He said the lower Darling was a "system in crisis" and its management needed to be examined.

"We have to start talking about one of the elephants in the room, which is the over allocation of licences upstream," he said.

"We've got large, foreign-owned irrigators who are extracting huge volumes of water. That means water is not reaching the lower levels of the Darling.

*You can see it in dad's eyes that he is heartbroken and he will do absolutely anything to get water back here.*

Kate McBride

"We're seeing the Murray-Darling Basin Plan up for review and in the Federal Parliament we may have an opportunity to contribute to that review process.

"I would also just caution against thinking the Greens can't play any role in a future government.

"The polls are looking pretty close at the moment between the two old parties.

"We may be in a very powerful position to have a negotiation with the old parties to talk about how we improve the health of this river system," Senator Di Natale said.



**PHOTO:** Farmers set up for a barbecue on the bed of the dry lower Darling River. (ABC Rural: Emma Brown)

## Farmers hope for bipartisan approach to river management

Grazier Rob McBride hosted the political visit on his sheep station Tolarno.

Mr McBride said the area was significant to the nation's history, being the site of a shearers' strike in 1894 and the only inland act of piracy in Australia with the burning of paddle steamer the Rodney.

He said he was hoping for a bipartisan approach on managing the river.

"The other major political parties aren't here so I think I really respect him more so for being here and looking at the disaster that's unfolding here on the Darling River," Mr McBride said.

"We need all the political parties to understand this really is a national disaster and we've got to work with each other.

"It's not just picking out one political party over the other.

"It's taken on a bipartisan approach and making a decision for the long term and allowing water to come down the Darling River, and that's the most important thing for our future."



**Photo:** [Kate McBride stands in front of the Tolarno Station homestead.](#) (ABC Rural: [Emma Brown](#))

## Young farmer concerned for future

Kate McBride is an 18-year-old university student who hopes to end up working in the agriculture sector.

She said the state of the river was an ongoing concern for her and her family.

Ms McBride said the strain of managing the dry river and campaigning for public awareness of the issue had taken its toll on her family.

"We need a river. You can't have sheep and you can't be running everything with no water," she said.

"Looking at this, how can I be expected to go into agriculture when I don't have water?"

"I see how much Dad struggles sometimes with water, constantly chasing water.

"Living up here throughout my childhood, there's always been water in the river and seeing it like this is absolutely heartbreaking.

"You can see it in Dad's eyes that he's heartbroken and he will do absolutely anything to get water back here and help out everyone around us."



**Photo:** [The dry Darling River bed between Menindee and Pooncarie.](#) (Emma Brown)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-24/greens-leader-richard-di-natale-visits-dry-darling-river/7441154>