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Published by Stock Journal Publishers Pty Limited  
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 Postal address: GPO box 2249, Adelaide, SA, 5001  
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ABN 45 007 871 105  
 Printed by Bridge Print, Adelaide Rd, Murray Bridge,  
 08 8532 1744

General manager: Ioe Wallman

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Smart news

## Dam meter control is 'absolute lunacy'

STRATHALBYN beef cattle stud owner Peter Manual (pictured) says a Natural Resources Management board proposal to impose meters on dams in the Mount Lofty ranges is "absolute lunacy".

"This has gone further than water," he said. "The more we look into it, we can see that it's about total control. You've got a State Government that thinks it can own the water that comes from the sky."

Peter says there will be ramifications down the food producing and retailing line, with retail food prices to go "through the roof" if farmers reduce their stock as a result.

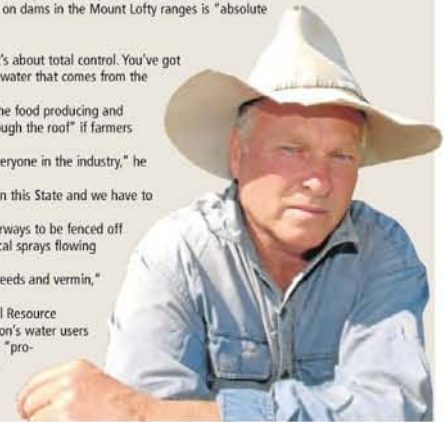
"This is going to have a massive effect on everyone in the industry," he said.

"It's the biggest thing that's ever happened in this State and we have to be very careful it doesn't go Australia-wide."

Peter also criticised plans for dams and waterways to be fenced off from livestock and said it could result in chemical sprays flowing into waterways.

"If they are fenced off we will get noxious weeds and vermin," he said.

An Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resource Management Board spokesperson said the region's water users would benefit from having their water resource "protected" by the proposed Water Allocation Plan, which "could" also result in a levy being charged.



## Threat to Hills water

By MALCOLM SUTTON

**A** NEW plan to meter dams and impose levies on water storage in the Adelaide Hills could reduce the region's productivity, stakeholders say.

Released by the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board last year, the draft Western Mount Lofty Ranges Water Allocation Plan has proposed mandatory meters to measure dam water-use for irrigation against annual water allocations and water licences.

The plan will also impose meters and levies on domestic rainwater tanks with a storage capacity more than 500 kilolitres (half the size of an olympic swimming pool), or rainwater tanks holding water for irrigation.

Stock and domestic dams will not be affected by the system unless they hold 5 megalitres or more.

Independent Member of the Legislative Council John Darley says the plan is about governmental control.

"It seems to me the public servants are running wild on this," he said.

"They can tell farmers and primary producers that they're going to have to put a meter on a dam and pay for it, or if it's used for stock and domestic dams you don't have to pay for it... it's lunacy."

"They might get to the stage where

### What's to be metered

- ▶ Irrigation dams, rainwater tanks
- ▶ Tanks using more than 500kL/year for commercial purposes
- ▶ Domestic, stock dams with more than 5mgl

they say this is the type of stock you can carry and this is how much, or a farmer might have to cut a metre off a dam wall and arrange for contours to redirect waters away from the dams... it's absolute madness."

Mr Darley said the plan had the potential to push up food retail prices by reducing supply into the post-farmgate meat industry.

Australian Meat Industry Council executive director Paul Sandercock agreed.

"The meat industry is very seasonal," he said.

"It peaks and troughs throughout the year, based on getting sufficient supplies and it seems to me, on face value, this legislation has the potential to limit those supplies."

An AMLR NRM Board spokesperson said the meters were required as a management tool to monitor and measure the amount of water that was being extracted for commercial purposes.

"It also assists in ensuring equity for all social, environmental and economic purposes," she said.

"For quite a few years, in many

areas around the State where water is managed through a water allocation plan, irrigators and other commercial water users have been making a contribution towards the cost of managing the water resources from which they benefit commercially."

The spokesperson said this contribution had been collected as a levy and, once the Western Mount Lofty Ranges WAP is developed, "it is possible" the region's commercial water users would also have to pay a levy.

"The rate of the future levy has not been determined," she said.

"Similar levies in the region are 1 cent per kL."

The draft Western Mt Lofty Ranges WAP received 78 submissions before public consultation closed on January 10.

A public meeting on the subject, chaired by Independent MLC Nick Xenophon on the WAP has been scheduled for March 28 at Strathalbyn Town Hall at 7.30pm.

The Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges Water Allocation Plan, which has been drafted and is expected for release soon, is expected to include similar changes.

• **City water demand p5**  
 • **Need to know more?**  
 Visit [www.amlrnm.sa.gov.au](http://www.amlrnm.sa.gov.au) to view the plan's proposals. Public submissions received before January 10 are being considered by the board before it is referred to Water Minister Paul Caica for consideration.

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