



SENATOR DAVID LEYONHJELM

Leader of the Liberal Democrats

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Greens peddling lies on fish kill

Liberal Democrats Senator David Leyonhjelm has slammed the Greens' false claims that cotton farmers are to blame for massive fish deaths in the Menindee Lakes.

"Senator Hanson-Young was either displaying her usual appalling ignorance of environmental matters or sought to deliberately mislead ABC listeners when she told RN Breakfast today that 'big cotton' was to blame for the fish kill," Senator Leyonhjelm said.

"No general security irrigation allocations have been issued to cotton farmers, or any other primary producers north of the Murray River in NSW since July 2017, and this zero allocation was maintained by the NSW Government as recently as last month."

[The NSW Government water allocation statement can be viewed here.](#)

"In the last 18 months, just 16 gigalitres of high security water has been extracted out of the Barwon-Darling by irrigators – an amount that would have evaporated out of the Menindee Lakes in less than three weeks.

"As a result, no cotton has been grown in Bourke this season (compared to 4,000 hectares last year), while in the cotton heartland of Dirranbandi just a fraction (300 hectares) of cotton has been planted compared to drought-free years."

Senator Leyonhjelm chaired a Senate inquiry into the Murray Darling Basin in 2015-2016, which found that the loss of irrigation water through the Murray Darling Basin Plan was crippling rural communities. The inquiry found that almost 1000GLs of water was being taken from productive agriculture in Victoria and NSW and reallocated to South Australia, only to evaporate in the Lower Lakes.

"The current environmental catastrophe at the Menindee Lakes and lower Darling River is directly attributable to the massive release of water beginning in 2018. This water was sent to South Australia only to be flushed out to sea," he said.

"The large amount of environmental water being recovered under the current plan must be subjected to more rigorous scrutiny to avoid any future environmental disasters.

"And the Greens should do some basic research and desist from peddling their ignorance, misinformation and scapegoating."

Media: Kelly Burke 0408 734 586

Kelly.burke@aph.gov.au