maitlandmercury.com.au FRIDAY FEBRUARY 11, 2022





DESPAIR: Matthew Dennis holds an irrigation pipe at his East Maitland farm. Picture: Marina Neil

## FOOD BOWL FURY

BY BELINDA-JANE DAVIS

MAITLAND'S food bowl is on the brink of extinction amid a state government plan to stop farmers from irrigating their crops at certain times.

claims a cease to pump order mere 3.7 per cent. on the Hunter and Paterson

River to Oakhampton, Gostwyck and the Seaham Weir.

But farmers say the government has no evidence to support this need. They extract 23,000 mega litres of the 622,000 allocated each The state government year under water licences - a

If the draft replacement rivers, and Wallis Creek, water sharing plan for the is necessary to protect the Hunter Unregulated and Hunter Estuary - a large area Alluvial Water Source 2022

Slow Food Earth Market in The Levee - a venture created to support local farmers and biodiversity in the region.

It would also shut down farms along the Hunter River - everything from dairies and vegetables to beef, turf and lucerne.

Food grown here and sold through the Sydney markets, the Newcastle markets, the earth market and other farm-

from the mouth of the Hunter is approved it would kill the ers markets will dry up. Local Planning, Industry and Encrops that Hunter and Sydney restaurants buy direct from farmers will be gone.

> And, the ingredients for almost 10,000 meals that Slow Food Hunter Valley volunteers make each year for the city's most vulnerable would be wiped out.

> Five hundred direct jobs and 3000 indirect jobs would be affected.

The NSW Department of

vironment did not answer The Mercury's questions but did say that "feedback will be considered before the draft plan is finalised".

For East Maitland farming duo Matthew and Liam Dennis, who have recently planted 2000 carrot and onion lost," Matthew said. seedlings, a cease to pump order would be diabolical.

They've worked for the past five years to diversify so

they can both survive on the land and now they will be forced off the farm.

"If you buy thousands of seedlings you need to water them to keep them alive. I can't plant them and then be issued with a cease to pump order - the whole crop will be

"We can't work with this order, we'll have to sell the farm."

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## MERYL SWANSON MP

As your federal representative, issues I can assist with include:

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Authorised by Meryl Swanson ALP Raymond Terrace





## **PETITION RULES**:

Please take care when signing the petition to make it count.

The NSW Parliament requires that you:

- Fill in the three columns
- Write your first name and last name
- Provide your full address
- Provide your signature
- Write it in English
- Anyone under the age of 18 can sign if they understand the issue.

The petition needs more than 10,000 signatures before it can be tabled in NSW Parliament and debated. It will be tabled by Maitland MP Jenny Aitchison.

Thank you for your help.



HUNTER VALLEY INC





To the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales.

The Petition of the citizens of New South Wales brings to the attention of the House the food and biodiversity crisis that will unfold on farms along the Hunter and Paterson rivers, and Wallis Creek, if the government restricts farmers from irrigating their crops at certain times. These farms grow food and plants for communities as well as animal feed and they won't be able to stay afloat if the draft replacement water sharing plan for the Hunter Unregulated and Alluvial Water Source 2022 is approved. It would kill the Slow Food Earth Market Maitland - the first of its kind in Australia. It would shut down farms - everything from dairies and vegetables to beef, turf and lucerne. Generational farms would be lost and the resurgence of young farmers would end. It would ruin the agricultural vista residents enjoy and tourists come to see.

The undersigned petitioners therefore ask the Legislative Assembly to ensure that farmers are given the opportunity to continue to base their decision to irrigate their crops on the needs of their enterprise and the quality of the water available to them on their farm, within their licence allocation.

Signature	Name	Address

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