

# Sharing water on farms

BY MICHAEL SIMMONS

THERE is a concern among farming group Food Producers Land Action Group (FLAG) that Low-Flow By Passes are back on the government agenda. However, State Minister for Human Services Michelle Lensink and Member for Finnis David Basham said the Marshall government is not proposing to make the installation of Low-Flow By Passes mandatory.

Low-Flow By Passes are an engineering solution designed to ensure a minimum amount of water (usually about 15 per cent) enters natural waterways before filling a dam. This ensures natural waterways receive natural flows, contributing to the environmental and ecological health and function of local catchments.

FLAG executive director Peter Manuel is concerned that Low-Flow Bypasses will become mandatory to farmers. "This will make it harder to produce food. Low-Flow By Passes were introduced to share the water between the environment and the farmer," Mr Manuel said.

"They are not mandatory, but optional and I have been advised by some farmers that they have been told that it is compulsory to have a Low-Flow By Pass. I have been getting calls from farmers wanting to know if that is correct." Mr Manuel said the dams on farms are an ecosystem and flood irrigation ponds and

the farmer needs the water to grow critical need food. "FLAG Australia would like to thank the Liberal Party for not making these mandatory and Independent in the Legislative Council John Darley for being consistent on this issue," he said.

Mr Darley said the federal government has supported a series of low-flow bypasses in the Angas and Bremer catchments in the Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges through funding of \$12 million from the Flows for the Future Program.

"I have been advised that some natural resources management officers are telling landowners that the South Australian government intends to make installation of these systems compulsory

during 2019 and landowners will be required to contribute to the cost," Mr Darley said.

Minister for Human Services Michelle Lensink stated in Parliament that there was no intention to transition the program from being voluntary to mandatory.

"The Department for Environment and Water has advised that since 2015, approximately \$690,000 of state funds and \$1.1 million of Commonwealth funds has been expended across the Eastern and Western Mount Lofty Ranges and 230 landholders expressed interest. In the Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges construction works commenced at the start of

2018, with 100 sites returning low flows to date," Ms Lensink said.

Member for Finnis David Basham said the government made an election commitment to continue to administer the Securing Low Flows project as a voluntary program. "Low Flow By-Passes are a viable and effective option in some circumstances for both landholders and the environment, in that order."