

[Home](#) / [Dairy](#)

# Levee repair funding delays create concerns for River Murray farmers



By [Elizabeth Anderson](#)

Updated February 7 2024 - 5:05pm, first published 3:17pm



Dairyfarmer David Smart, Mypolonga, is about one kilometre from the River Murray and says the flats behind him were under three metres of water until about mid-May. He has only been able to use them again since September. Picture by Elizabeth Anderson

The government has pledged more than \$30 million in funding for the repair of levees damaged in the 2022-23 River Murray flood, but many have labelled it a case of too little, and too late.

Last week, the state and federal government [announced \\$17.1m in funding for the repairs of government-owned levees](#) between Mannum and Wellington, with another \$14.2m for initial repairs for privately-owned levees in the lower Murray from the SA government.

Some have questioned why this funding is coming more than 12 months after the initial flood and seven months after the excess water was finally pumped out of the river flats.

SA Dairyfarmers' Association chief executive officer Andrew Curtis said while the funding was very welcome, it was "frustrating" it had

"This is only the interim works, and consultations and committees still need to happen for long-term works," he said.

"The \$30m proposed isn't going to get everything back to even pre-flood levels, let alone satisfactory levels."

Mr Curtis said the lack of certainty for farmers made it harder for them to make plans and look ahead.

"There is a lot of opportunity in the dairy industry and people want to plan for and capture that opportunity, but it's hard to do that if you don't know the fate of critical infrastructure," he said.

South Australian Deputy Premier Susan Close said this funding would allow for the completion of immediate works while a longer-term strategy was developed to bolster resilience of the region's levee network - both government and privately owned.

It also follows some immediate remediation work, which began as early as March last year.

A spokesperson for Ms Close's office said there had been "considerable work" undertaken in the past 13 months, including emergency response repairs to damaged levees to allow dewatering and get people back on their land.

"While the state government undertook this work, it also negotiated a funding package with the federal government to ensure the integrity of the government levees until such time the longer-term remediation works can be completed," they said.

"Levees are designed to be effective up to their design height.

## Beef buoyancy

PREVIEW Feb 7 · Stock Journal

Save on Spotify

"Many of the levees overtopped and therefore they worked as they were intended."

Mypolonga dairyfarmer David Smart said he was always aware the repairs would be happening in stages, but he had not expected it to take so long for stage two to be implemented.

"It's going to be nowhere near enough money to do the job properly," he said.

He wants to see the levees restored to the level pre-flood, but is concerned it may not happen quickly enough, particularly with the threat of wet weather along the eastern states, with Cyclone Kirrily, which could soon be coming down the Darling and Murray.

"That's where the water came from last time," he said.

He said with the levees in their existing state, any minor flood, or even a "high river" would likely result in overtopping again.

Mr Smart has been working to rebuild his dairy operation, after needing to dry off his cows for most of 2023, slowly bringing cows back and resuming milking again in September.

At the moment he is milking 160 cows - before the flood he was up to 640.

He was among a group of Lower River Murray Reclaimed Irrigation Area representatives meeting with government representatives on Wednesday to discuss the process going forward.

promise those most impacted.

"I think they've got to cut back on the bureaucracy and spend more money on contractors, otherwise half the money will be gone," he said.

"(The levees) don't need to be higher than what they were before but they do need to be maintained."

Opposition spokesperson on Water Resources and the River Murray Nicola Centofanti said while she was pleased a funding agreement has finally been reached, it should have been addressed immediately following the flood - not a year down the track.

"It's incredibly concerning that Labor's moving at a snail's pace when it comes to ongoing levee management, despite more than a year since the peak of the flood," she said.

"It is troubling that it's taken this long for them to work out a funding agreement and quite frankly, it is a kick in the guts to many

Ad

governments should have been doing 12 months ago.

Member for Hammond Adrian Pederick also questioned the delays.

"Over the past year, irrigators have been pleading with the SA government to provide assistance so they can repair their private levees but were told the state was waiting on federal government funds," Mr Pederick said.

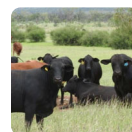
"If the state government had funds available all along I fail to comprehend why they are only now just deciding to allocate it to these critical repair works."

### Read More:

River Murray tourism operators given boost to help recovery



Million acre cattle station and irrigation farm sells to SA business family



Get more from Stock Journal

Our journalists work hard to provide local, up-to-date news to the community:

- Sign up for our [newsletters](#)
- Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)
- 🗨️ Have your say and [send a letter to the Editor](#)



Elizabeth Anderson  
Journalist



FOLLOW

Editor of Stock Journal.

Related stories



Cropping in prime location



Family proves to be at the heart of The Bellum Hotel



Landholders to fight African lovegrass



Mt Pleasant sheep sale reaches \$190 top



Strong crowds, solid sales as Stock Journal Beef Week wraps up



Crucial period ahead for grain prices

Most Viewed

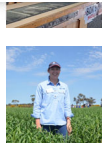
**1** Solid lamb offering responds to improved returns at



**4** Tarcowie pub set to reopen after 16 years of privatisation



and offers warm  
**3** New export hay project begins to help improve quality and



women  
**6** SE stud bull sale hits five figures



---

**More from Dairy**

**Fonterra dumps milk supply deal with Woolnorth owner Van Dairy Limited**

24m ago

---

**Levee repair funding delays create concerns for River Murray farmers**

---

**Global dairy price rebound gains momentum with another auction price rise**



---

**Feedpad provides flow-on benefits in the wet on Victorian dairy farm**



---

**Get the latest SA news in your inbox**

Sign up for our newsletter to stay up to date.

Enter your email

Notify me

We care about the protection of your data. [Read our Privacy Policy.](#)

StockJournal

---

AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY MEDIA



---

STOCK JOURNAL



