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**Title:**

Release - Chowilla Dam

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The resolution of the River Murray Commission concerning the indefinite deferring of the Chowilla project and the requirement that South Australia reduce expenditure on the project to a minimum as rapidly as possible, has naturally given rise to widespread dismay in South Australia where we have sought through the Chowilla project to be assured during dry years of getting what is our normal allocation of River Murray waters.

Without some further arrangement than exists at the moment, in dry years South Australia could be badly over-committed on diversion from the River Murray when the pipeline to the metropolitan area from Murray Bridge had been built and when the approved plantings requiring River Murray water had been developed.

The report of the Commissioner, Mr. Beaney, who represents South Australia on the Commission has, however, shown us that there were three other factors arising from investigations by the River Murray Commission in addition to the vastly increased cost of the project since it was first approved, which resulted in the other Commissioners refusing to let a tender for the dam at the moment. These were that since the dam had originally been approved for design, it has been shown clearly that certain minimum flows must be maintained at Mildura in order to reduce the saline content of the River Murray for irrigation; that the evaporation loss through Chowilla was much greater than assumed in 1962, and that the capacity of the Blowering Dam had been increased markedly. The Commissioners, therefore, have wanted to investigate some other way of assuring the water to South Australia which it needs in dry years.

The Government believes we must have an assurance of that water because without it we cannot proceed adequately with our plans for general development. I have therefore been in

touch with the Prime Minister to ask for an immediate meeting of Ministers concerned to obtain an assurance from the Governments represented on the River Murray Commission that whatever happens in the future South Australia will be assured of the necessary water.

The Prime Minister has asked me to put my request in writing to him and he will, in the meantime, inform himself fully on the situation and I am hopeful of an urgent reply from him.

It is also clear from the discussions at the River Murray Commission that the Chowilla project is certainly not dead but that the River Murray Commission refuses to proceed until further investigations have been completed which will go beyond the time available to us for dealing with current tenders.

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