

Commins Enterprises

Date 30-11-10

Attention Mr Mike Taylor
Chairman
MDBA

RE: Guide to the proposed Basin Plan

Dear Mr Taylor

I strongly disagree with the proposed water cuts outlined in the draft Murray Darling Basin Plan. The angst and hurt you are putting regional communities through is unnecessary and shows how little regard you and the MDBA have for agriculture and people who live west of the Great Divide. You must feel very proud of your achievement. As chairman of this committee you should be above being a mouthpiece for the Green lobby. We have argued for balance in this whole program and all you have delivered is a one sided argument for the environment.

Background

- Owner operator of a farming & manufacturing enterprise in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area
- We currently employ 24 full time staff
- My family has been farming in this area since the 1940's.

Objections & Comments

- Currently we employ 24 full time staff. If the plan is approved then our business will be forced to cut the same percentage of staff proportional to the water cuts.
- Your anticipated number of job losses in the plan are completely unrealistic. Reality is it will be tens of thousands of jobs
- Research and my calculations indicate that the amount of water which evaporates off the lower lakes each year is upward of 1000 gigalitres. This is a third of the estimate to save the Murray Darling Basin. On average a farmer will make a profit of \$200/ML. At the current market value, this volume equates to a profit of \$200 million dollars to farmers. Working on the principal that \$1 will go around the community 15 times that is a loss to regional communities of 3 billion dollars **wasted to evaporation**. If the plan goes ahead with the full 3000 GL to "fully repair" the river then this equates to 9 Billion dollars per year out of local communities.
- The demise of the local community is a disincentive for anyone to start up new businesses across regional Australia. We were looking at establishing a processing plant for Industrial Hemp which would create significant employment in the area, not anymore!

- It is grossly unfair that Victoria will not be tied to this process until 2019. This will create an uneven playing field across the agricultural industry between New South Wales and Victoria. All states should have the same start date for water cuts if the plan goes ahead (2019).
- The authority should immediately compensate the earth moving contractors and the irrigation design specialists for loss of income. The farmers who are anticipating losing water in 2014, will start preparing for that immediately. For example, our operation spends \$100,000 a year on laser levelling, dam storages and reticulation systems. Our new development projects have been halted immediately pending the outcome of the proposed water cuts. So my single operator /contractor who has done all our laser levelling earth works over the last 20 years is \$100,000 out of pocket **NOW** not in 2014. He is \$100,000 out of pocket in 2011 and 2012 and 2013. Is this **Fair!!!!**

Proposed Solutions which should be considered before any water cuts be enforced

- Leave the system status quo and let nature take its course. You cannot expect instant results from nature, give the 1300 gegalitres already reclaimed from the Murray Darling Basin with the Cap, buyback and savings a chance to work. Especially considering the river system has been experiencing the worst drought on record, so **GIVE NATURE A CHANCE TO WORK.**
- Build new infrastructure to capture the water on the eastern seaboard, rather than letting it flow out into the ocean. Australia has not built a new dam for over 30 years, what a disgraceful blight on our society, as a nation we should be ashamed of ourselves.
- Reassess the lower lakes as **NOT** be being part of the 16 Ramsar sacred environmental wetland sites. This freshwater status is not the natural state for these lower lakes. Australia has lost 90% of its estuarine environment by turning the lower lakes into freshwater lakes. Let tidal flows keep the mouth of the Murray open.
- Return the lower lakes to the natural estuarine environment by removing the barrages.
- If the South Australian Government wants to keep these lakes in an artificial state let them buy the water on the open market to maintain the unnatural freshwater status of the lower lakes. A dam needs to be built at Wellington SA. This Dam would supply Adelaide with fresh water.
- The same amount of water being supplied now would be measured at the dam, not the Murray mouth. This would give the SA Govt the potential to utilize more than 1000 gegalitres for whatever purpose they wanted. Put it to productive agricultural use or environmental use or just let it evaporate.

Please let common sense prevail and get some real balance in these reforms, and include the social, economic and the environmental aspects, and treat them all **equally.**

Yours sincerely

Tim Commins