

Submission to:- MDBA concerning Draft to the Guide to the Basin Plan

from R Caldwell

I attended 2 of your consultation meetings. I believe a fundamental deficiency was that you advocated irrigation reductions but you have not done any associated economic or production costings.

I assume your claim for 3,000GI or 4,000GI in irrigation reductions is ambit. You have not considered removing the barrages as suggested by Dr Morahassey (see copy). The claim appears to be politically driven in the interest of South Australia for dubious uncostered reasons.

Your proposed cuts on the Lachlan of 45GI to 69GI for surface allocations and cuts of 61GI to groundwater allocations are in addition to the NSW Water Sharing Plan cuts, and are unnecessary. I think the cuts must be at the "feel good" whim of some Green Pressure Group and/or some Green bureaucrat. The Lachlan valley does not contribute to Murray flows.

Irrigation allocations have been relegated to a lower priority than Environmental flows at the expense of productivity. The diminished reliability and volumes of diversions on the Lachlan has made at least half the production unprofitable. There will be negligible production in the second and subsequent years of drought. Producers will leave the industry because it is unprofitable. Free trade policy will keep prices low and production will be replaced by more imports.

I think your Guides 1 & 2, have negligible hydrologic detail to plan for next years production. They are a waste of tax payers money and seek to legitimize the down sizing a legitimate industry. Irrigators are not represented in the NSW or Federal Government and buy backs are occurring at a price which is about one quarter of waters true value.

The Federal promise of \$5.8 billion for water efficiency improvements haven't eventuated and probably very little will trickle down to the farm level.

NSW has been persuaded by Federal money to implement allocation reductions. The state will be poorer as a consequence with production moving interstate. As an Irrigator experiencing my water rights being continuously eroded, I see little future investing more money in NSW irrigation.

The contempt shown to irrigators by the Federal and NSW Governments and MDBA is being continually demonstrated (see recent debate over priority of environmental concerns verses equal priority with socio-economic concerns.

The Whitlam and Hawke Governments managed Australia into unsustainable Current Account Deficits and Trade Deficits. History is in the process of being repeated by the Rudd/Gillard Government.

I can only shake my head as the MDBA and The Gillard Government downsize by 50%, a world competitive export industry for "No Good Reason". Please explain ?

Yours sincerely

Robert Caldwell

Date:- 17-12-2010

Excuses but no barrage reason

ENVIRONMENT
FOR CHANGE



Jennifer
Marohasy

I HAVE received a barrage of excuses as to why the Lower Lakes should remain fresh rather than removing the barrages and letting the area fill with seawater, as suggested in "Basin barrage of bad ideas" (*The Land*, November 4, p26).

And I've made a few inquiries to understand why, for example, the Government and the Opposition remain silent on the issue.

Advisors to both major political parties tell me the barrages are far

Advisors to both major political parties tell me the barrages are far too contentious an issue, even for discussion, and that advocating the removal of the barrages could cost them important votes in South Australia

too contentious an issue, even for discussion, and that advocating the removal of the barrages could cost them important votes in South Australia.

Ask your average South Australian about removing the barrages and they may have no idea what you are talking about or harp on about how if there was no

upstream irrigation there would always be flow down the Murray River and then no need for the barrages.

Indeed, such flawed reasoning suggests a need for discussion, because nobody can guarantee flow down the river, particularly without the infrastructure built for irrigation.

One resident of Milang, SA, a small town on the shores of Lake Albert, emailed me saying he wouldn't like to see the barrages removed because the local caravan park might be inundated with sea water.

He explained sea levels have risen since the barrages were installed over 70 years ago.

But not enough, I assured him, to flood the caravan park.

Phew! Imagine if it really did come down to a choice between irrigated agriculture across NSW

and Victoria or the Milang caravan park.

Another wayward excuse comes from the NSW Irrigators' Council.

Their leadership claims nothing can be done about the barrages because the Lower Lakes are listed as a freshwater wetland in an international inter-governmental treaty.

But the Ramsar Convention can allow for the protection of wetlands, whether they are coastal, estuarine or freshwater, and I suggest the Irrigators' Council petition for the current listing to be changed to estuarine.

Of course, the National Irrigators' Council doesn't want discussion of the issue for fear of offending its South Australian members, but surely the few remaining dairy farmers who draw from the Lower Lakes could be persuaded to have their water piped in.

I'm saving the barb for worst excuse for keeping the barrages, though, for Rob Freeman, chief executive of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, and his comment at the Narrabri community consultative meeting that the barrages must stay because there is no scientific justification for removing them.

He is plain wrong and should start reading some science, perhaps beginning with the scientific report, *River Murray Barrages*, commissioned by the Murray-Darling Basin Commission, (edited by Anne Freeman et al), published in 2000, which explains how the barrages are the cause of serious degradation of the Lower Lakes and Coorong.

■ Dr Jennifer Marohasy is an independent environmental writer and researcher now living in Rockhampton in central Queensland.