

Submission to the MDBA re the basin plan.
By Robert Warren

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I am a cattle farmer and irrigator in the Namoi Valley.

The following is a rambling of thoughts I noted when reading the plan vol 1 & 2. The thoughts either show the statistics are twisted to the benefit of the environment or just the plain unfairness of the plan to all human parties especially those that are already efficient and not over stressing the river.

At the end of my ramble I outline a few solutions and reasoning's of why we need alternative solutions.

The Murray basin is 65% of all irrigation land in Australia, but only uses 50% of the water used for irrigation. This makes the basins users 30% more efficient than other river users already.

Since there is no science even in these reports that says how much water is needed it seems The initial plan of how much water is needed was extracted from a document written by the Wentworth group. They are funded by the Purves Environmental Fund.

The Wentworth group are only using data from during the drought. The Purves Environmental Fund is a environmental group owned by Robert Purves, a director of the WWF (world wildlife fund) who vision statement includes "We seek to instill in people everywhere a discriminating, yet unabashed, reverence for nature"

Page xvii – Establishing a baseline.

Inflow is 32,800 river and 26500 ground equals 59,300 gig

Used is 13,700 1,700 equals 15,400 (2,740 from farm dams)

This equates to about 25% of the water, so 75 % is already enviro flow.

If we remove our own catchment it drops to 21%, not worth noting really.

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the long-term average amount of water that would flow through the Murray Mouth if there was no development is about 12,500 GL/y.

average amount of water flowing out of the Murray Mouth is about 5,100 GL/y.

This means 40% of all water flows out the mouth.

The water used by everyone Including irrigation, towns, environment, evaporation is 60%

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several regions

appear to be at a relatively higher risk of substantial social impacts,

including in the north-east of the Basin, the Border Rivers, Gwydir, Namoi and Macquarie–Castlereagh regions and, in the southern Basin, the Lachlan, Loddon, Murrumbidgee and Murray regions.

Says it all really. Considering the namoi is already supplies 79% of its water to the environment.

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There will be some assistance for water entitlement holders from water buybacks and potential payment in certain circumstances. For example, the Australian Government has indicated it will bridge any gap between what has been returned to the environment and what is required to be returned under the final Basin Plan for surface water.

Should there be any remaining gap when water resource plans are implemented — for example, from insufficient willing sellers — the proposed risk allocation provisions will be triggered.

Tony Burke said there will be no forced buybacks but this obviously says there will be.

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Figure 2.4 clearly shows the environment gets 40% now with another 15% flowing out into the ocean.

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Says that 82% of water used is by irrigation, but in fact its 83% of the used water not including, flow past that is 40% and its generally accepted that 30% will evaporate so really they use 83% of 30%, so about 25% of the water going past.

Lies, damn lies and statistics.

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Direct reduction of irrigated product of up to 35%, the basin produces 39% of Australia's food. Therefore this reduction will reduce Australia's food production by 13%. Apparently we feed 600 million people worldwide so 78 million people will starve.

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Shows the namoi at 79% river health and that is during the worst drought on record. (2004 to 2009)

80% is considered good, so less than 500gl would more than fix us, why then 3000 to 4000?

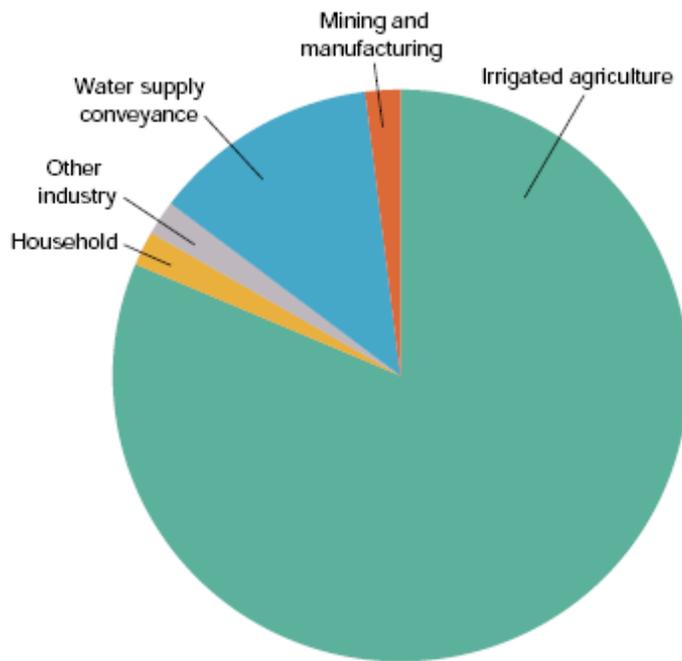


Figure 2.3 Consumptive water use by sector in the Murray-Darling Basin

Figure 2.3 appears to show the consumptive use of the water by sector but the pre-amble clearly says it shows the breakdown is for the key areas only, not the whole basin.

Lies, not adding the entire basin deliberately skews the figures to make the farming sector look like it uses more water than it really does.

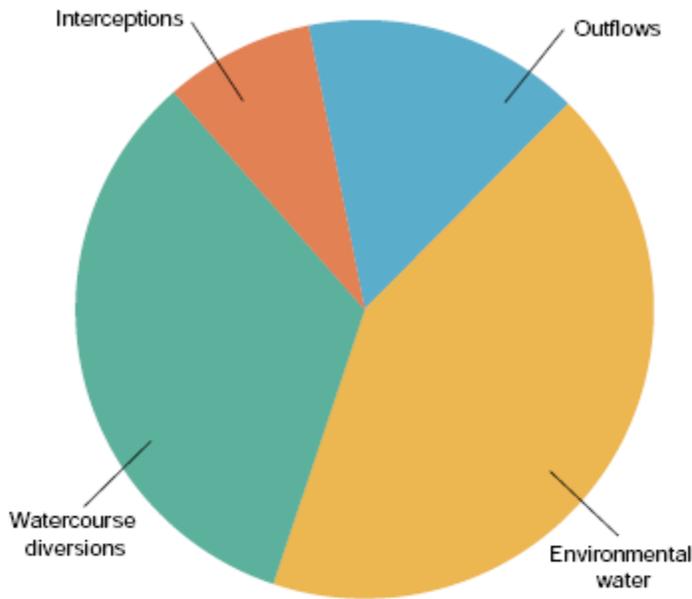


Figure 2.4 Current shares between diversions, interceptions and outflows, and from the Murray Mouth and the environment

Figure 2.4 shows that irrigation only uses about 40% of all the water in the basin as watercourse diversions and interceptions. (not 80% as misstated elsewhere) The other 60% is already used for the environment or outflows. So if the irrigators and environment already allow water past, surely adding more water into the system will just put more water in the outflow column.

Table 2.1 Fast facts: Murray–Darling Basin

Attribute	Murray–Darling Basin
Area ^a	1,042,730 km ² (14% of mainland Australia)
Average annual rainfall (1997–2006) ^b	469 mm
Long-term average annual rainfall (1895–2006) ^c	457 mm

After all the hype and fuss about falling rainfall table 2.1 from Volume 2 shows the average rainfall is 3% more than the total long term average rainfall. Where is the less rainfall? This makes a folly of all the global warming, reduced rainfall hysteria.

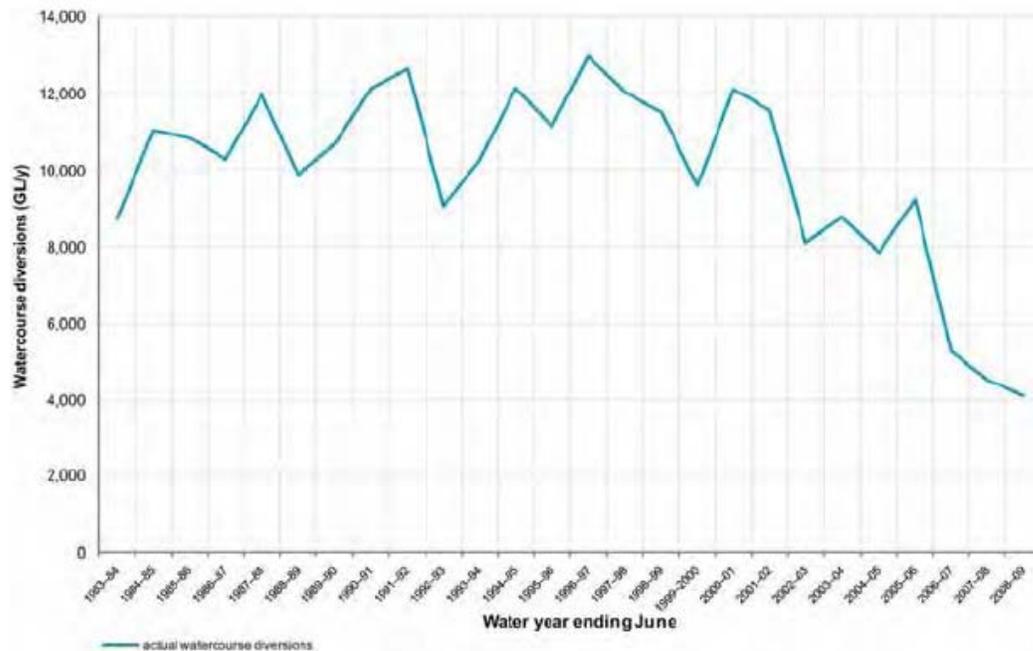


Figure 2.5 Surface-water use, 1983–84 to 2008–09: Murray–Darling Basin

Figure 2.5 shows average use from 83-02 is over 10,000gl/y steadily dropping to 4,000gl/y in 2009. This is a 60% decrease in the 7 years since 2002. How much more can we give.

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In 2006, there were 65,472 businesses in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector in the Basin, comprising 32% of the Basin total. The largest decline in Basin employment was in this sector, reducing by 11.9% between 2001 and 2006 (13,300 employees).

Obviously this shows that reduced water (fig2.5) from 2001 to 2006 resulted in 11% reduction in jobs, so further permanent reductions will give a higher result as farmer will reduce their cropping further.

Table 4.4 Environmental water requirements of regions, expressed as end-of-system flows

Region	End-of-system gauge(s)	End-of-system flow — GLy long-term average (% of without-development value)			
		Without development	Current arrangements	High uncertainty	Low uncertainty
Northern Basin					
Barwon–Darling (represents whole of Darling at Menindee)	Darling River at Menindee	3,273	1,721 (53%)	2,213 (68%)	2,639 (81%)
Border Rivers	Barwon River at Mungindi, Boomi River at Neeworra, and Weir River flow to Barwon	797	513 (64%)	560 (70%)	653 (82%)
Condamine–Balonne	Narayan, Culgoa and Bokhara flow to Darling	569	241 (42%)	355 (62%)	456 (80%)
Gwydir	Gil Gil Creek at Galloway, Gingham watercourse flow into Gil Gil Creek, Gwydir River at Collymongle, and Mehi River at Collarenebri	429	173 (40%)	260 (61%)	344 (80%)
Macquarie ^a (including Bogan)	Marthaguy Creek at Carinda, Macquarie River at Carinda, Bogan River at Gongolgin, and Marra Creek at Billy Bingbone Bridge	664	481 (72%)	490 (74%)	571 (86%)
Castlereagh	Castlereagh River at Coonamble	96	96 (100%)	No additional flow required ^c	No additional flow required ^c
Moonie	Moonie flow to Barwon	96	71 (74%)	74 (77%)	82 (85%)
Namoi	Namoi River at Goangra, Pian Creek at Waminda	828	653 (79%)	688 (83%)	733 (89%)
Paroo	Paroo flow to Darling at Wilcannia	59	59 (100%)	No additional flow required ^c	No additional flow required ^c
Warrego	Warrego River at Fords Bridge	69	58 (84%)	60 (86%)	61 (88%)
Southern Basin					
Campaspe	Campaspe River at Echuca	281	153 (54%)	191 (68%)	231 (82%)
Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges	Not applicable	73	67 (92%)	No additional flow required ^c	No additional flow required ^c
Goulburn–Broken	Goulburn River at McCoys Bridge	3,368	1,646 (49%)	2,114 (63%)	2,706 (80%)
Lachlan ^a	Lachlan River at Oxley	160	97 (60%)	116 (73%)	136 (85%)
Willandra	Willandra Creek end of system	122	113 (92%)	No additional flow required ^c	No additional flow required ^c
Loddon	Loddon River at Appin South	145	61 (42%)	91 (63%)	116 (80%)
Lower Darling	Not applicable	Included in Murray analysis			
Murrumbidgee ^a	Murrumbidgee River at Balranald	2,724	1,223 (45%)	1,701 (62%)	2,185 (80%)
Billabong Creek	Billabong Creek at Darlot	124	322 (260%)	No additional flow required ^c	No additional flow required ^c
Ovens	Ovens River at Peechelba	1,728	1,728 (99%)	No additional flow required ^c	No additional flow required ^c
Wimmera–Avoca ^b	Wimmera River upstream of Lake Hindmarsh	212	157 (74%)	No additional flow required ^c	No additional flow required ^c
Murray (represents whole of Murray–Darling Basin)	Barrage flow	12,503	5,105 (41%)	7,824 (63%)	10,046 (80%)

Table 4.4, My region (the Namoi) is at 79% and needs 89% to be healthy??? Why does the Murrumbidgee only need 80% to be healthy, 1% more than the Namoi is currently.

If the billabong creek had no development it would outflow 124gl, but it's current out flow id 322gl, 198gl more than before development, what piece of science can produce 150% more water than before development, if your han do that do it every where. well there is the first 200gl of a new plan

The wimmera-avoca system is at 74% but they don't need to return any water. 4% less than the Namoi at current amount. Why?

We always hear about the poor Paroo, it has 100% for the environment.

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- 12-13% reduction in the current diversion limit for the Ovens SDL Area.

Table 4.4 says no water needs to come from the ovens, but 12-13% is going to be taken. Contradiction, again.

No irrigation is being taken if 100% of the flow is already there so how can the irrigators give back 12%.

If no irrigation is 12% above the amount needed to make the river healthy, then the river is not dying due to irrigation.

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The ABARE Water Trade Model results indicate that water use for irrigated cotton would decline by between 20 and 26% over the range of SDL proposals. These proposals would result in a reduction in value of annual irrigated cotton production of between 19 and 26%. This is in contrast to recent experience during the drought, in which 2006-07 cotton production in the Basin was 59% lower than in 2000-01.

This assumption assumes that the irrigators who out waited the drought (knowing that it would end) would bother to continue in cotton or buy new equipment or even plant cotton on the good years knowing that the available water may not be available for enough years to make the purchases viable as the water will be reduced and never available.

Table 4.26 Volumes required to meet critical human water needs of Basin communities dependent on the River Murray system

State	Current (GL/y)	Proposed (GL/y)
New South Wales	75	61
Victoria	75	77
South Australia	201	204

This table shows that city folk within the basin will need to reduce their water use by 18% to meet the needs of the frogs. Nowhere in this plan does it note where human critical need is going to be eroded.

Something is very wrong with the figures and then the fairness of the amounts needed to "fix" the river. Why is a valley that is already giving 4/5th of its water to the environment expected to subsidise a valley that takes 6/10th of the water that passes by. Like the gwydir or loddon. This subsidy will cause 16% reduction (table 4.9) of income in agriculture in the valley and the subsequent job, infrastructure and community losses.

Table 2.7 Sustainable Rivers Audit hydrologic health assessments by valley, 2004–07: Murray–Darling Basin

Health rating	Valley
Good	Castlereagh, Kiewa, Mitta Mitta, Namoi, Ovens, Paroo, Warrego

Table 2.7

Health rating good!! So what's the problem? How letting more water out to get stuck in the Menindee lakes helps Adelaide is beyond me.

Finally my last question to you is.

Does this reduction of water reduce my rights to a reasonable amount of water for irrigation?

If so you have just breached section 100 of the Australian constitution and therefore are committing treason.

Solutions.

After reading the basin plan and seeing the devastation any reduction in irrigation would do to the farmers, communities, Australia and the world I have a few suggestions to resolve the problem.

Because of continuing rise in world population the time is well past to reduce the amount of food we need to grow to keep everyone fed. So more food is required not less, therefore reducing water cannot be sustainable.

Stop farming in Australia and we will import food from overseas, like milk from China containing melamine, or rice from a field in the middle of the Amazon, lentils from an Indian paddock and watered by human effluent.

The following solutions are expensive to create but cheap in the long run and will ensure the prosperity of Australia.

Solution 1.

Complete the snowy river scheme and tunnel back through the mountain to put the water currently diverted to the east of the ranges back to the west of the range where nature intended it to be.

This solution would return the water that was removed in years past and is currently wasted in ocean outflow.

This solution will also serve the environment better as the major flows will be snow melt, flooding the wetlands in spring. Spring is the traditional flooding time for wetlands downstream of the original river outlet. Thousands of years of spring flooding have shaped the wetlands and made them dependant of floods at these times, flooding at other times is beneficial but the spring floods are traditional.

Solution 2.

Divert waters from northern Queensland into the Darling.

Again an expensive option, but the benefits outweigh the costs because the monsoonal rains will ensure better flows in the river during summer, when the farmers need it. The water would of course increase the water in the river and the need to harvest winter water and store it on farm and accept all the losses of storage would be reduced increasing farm water efficiency, reducing losses and leaving more in the river than was diverted.

Solution 3.

Do nothing, the natural course of events will always be up and down, and using the new water sharing plans just introduced by the states will sort all the problems. Let the plans do their work.

Solution 4.

Build dams. Since when is it more important to allow water to run into the ocean when people are starving. Or use water to keep a frog alive before a person. There has been no new dams built since 1974 (Snowy River). Build a few dams, catch enough water to supply our needs, and then the rest can go to the environment. Once the dams are full there will be plenty of water for everything else.

Solution 5.

(By Barnaby Joyce) Increase irrigation throughout the basin, this will allow efficient Australian farmers to grow more food for the world, thus reducing the need for inefficient farmers in other countries whose practices are causing the global warming, like cutting down the Amazon. The reduction of global warming will return the rainfall to "normal" and return the river to health.

Solution 6.

Remove the man made barrier in the Menindee lakes returning 1400gl/y to the river. This saving is from evaporation savings alone.

Solution 7.

Cut a channel in South Australia to fill Lake Eyre. The filling of this massive water basin (16% of the continent when full) with natural salt water will increase rainfall in south eastern Australia. This extra rain would allow much more water to flow out to the ocean, cleaning the southern end of the basin as well as adding more reliable rain to the more arid parts of the basins irrigation community. Harvesting the salt is also another industry that could be established there.

Solution 8.

Change the law so that farmers are paid appropriately for their goods instead of the markets like Woolworths making all the money then farmers could feasibly grow less food, need less water but still make a suitable living.

An example of this is cattle prices, 1984 weaners-\$2.00 per kilo, 2010 weaners-\$2.00 per kilo. Shop prices 1984 t-bone-\$4.00kg 2010 t-bone-\$19.00kg

Where is the money for the farmer?

Solution 9.

Subsidise farmers like almost every other country, most European farmers can make a living from 20 to 30 cattle, but in Australia 300 head is considered borderline profitable.

Solution 10

By Dr Jennifer Marohasy Permanently opening or removing the barrages.

This would negatively impact on local irrigators who currently rely on the Lakes. Provisions would need to be made to buy-back their irrigation licenses. Consideration could also be given to compensating the commercial fishermen whose business currently depends on harvesting freshwater carp. In order to keep the river fresh and protect Adelaide's water supply in times of drought a weir needs to be built near Wellington. Consideration could also be given to construction of embankments on the Currency Creek and Finniss River if these wetlands are to be conserved as fresh during drought. But all of this is very achievable and much less expensive and much more environmentally responsible than continuing to demand more water from upstream particularly when supplies are limited during times of drought.

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Also after being at the meeting and having the MDBA say that the barrages were built to stop salt water going up the Murray, I found a letter at :

<http://newspapers.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/11100314?searchTerm=murray+barrage>

Electronic translation from newspaper article

The Argus (Melbourne, Vic. : 1848-1954) ([about](#))

[≤ Tuesday 27 July 1937 ≥](#)

BARRAGE AT MURRAY MOUTH

TO PREVENT SALT WATER from flowing upstream and affecting riverside properties, a **barrage** is being constructed by the South Australian Government at the **Murray** mouth at Goolwa The extent of the work is shown in this photograph(photo of a river worksite) of the concrete piers, between which stop logs will be dropped to keep back the salt water

Newspapers of the day say that's what it was for, but you have found a different reason later.