

23-11-10

Cockburn Valley Water Users and Landcare Association

Submission No. 140 SC

MURRAY DARLING BASIN AUTHORITY
GPO BOX 3001
CANBERRA ACT 2601

SUBMISSION TO DRAFT MURRAY DARLING BASIN PLAN

This submission is brief as the Volume 2 guide to the proposed basin plan was received eight days before submissions are due.

Twenty five days elapsed between the ordering of Volume 2 and the receiving of these documents.

How can anyone read and digest the guide's three volumes of 2394 pages and hope to make an informed response by the close of submissions? This is a typical tactic used by MDBA to snow ball this process through the so called consultation phase, with the minimum exposure to the public.

We are calling on you, the Murray Darling Basin Authority to freeze any further progress of this plan until you have properly included the irrigation industry in the development of this plan. Individual catchment committees must be set up to provide correct data to the MDBA.

Your draft plan is so badly flawed with incorrect data, it is dangerous to continue with it.

The Cockburn Valley is part of the Peel Valley with similar irrigation techniques, crops grown, the same climatic conditions and are operating under the same water sharing plan, which commenced 1st July 2010.

We insist that the Peel Valley be separated from the Namoi Valley in the basin plan process, because of the following reasons:

1. Namoi Valley uses mainly furrow irrigation plus on farm storages.
Peel and Cockburn Valleys use mainly spray irrigation and no on farm storages.
2. Namoi Valley main crops are cotton.
Peel and Cockburn Valley main crops are Lucerne.
3. Namoi Valley has a greater evaporation rate.
Peel and Cockburn Valley evaporation rate is one of the lowest in the basin.
4. Namoi Valley uses a greater percentage of average end system flow.
Peel Valley and all tributaries on average use 6 per cent of end of system flow.

Cockburn Valley uses on average 3 per cent of end of system flow.

5. The Peel Water Sharing Plan has slashed ground water usage to 17% of total entitlement for the Peel Valley and tributaries. Surface water access conditions under the plan on the unregulated Cockburn River, will mean that only part of licensed water entitlements can be accessed.
6. Irrigation farms in the Cockburn Valley vary between 5 and 60 hectares in size. There is no other alternative but to irrigate these farms to full capacity to remain viable.
7. Tony Burke stated on Landline 21/11/10 that all water cuts as proposed in the MDBA guide will be by buying water from willing sellers. Why do you then need to lower the SDL amount in the Peel Water Sharing Plan? This is another deceitful way of reducing irrigators' usage without compensation.
8. The Peel Water Sharing Plan only commenced on the 1st July 2010, after 10 months of negotiation between irrigators and the NSW Office of Water. The financial implications of this plan cannot be gauged fully until it has been in place for 5 to 10 years.
9. Victorian water sharing plans are not aligned to the new plan until 2019. Fifty one per cent of Murray flow comes from Victorian tributaries (total from the Namoi River only contributes to one per cent). All plans must be aligned at the same time.
10. The Authority must suspend any introduction of The Basin Plan until 2019, and until better information is available on the socioeconomic impacts of the Peel Water Sharing Plan and the proposed water buy backs (3000 gicalitres or more).
11. All engineering of water saving infrastructure should be implemented first before any water buy backs or the lowering of sustainable diversion limits on water sharing plans as proposed in the MDBA guide.
 - a. Remove the barrages at the mouth of the Murray River and allow the sea to have tidal movement into the Lower Lakes. This will stop the evaporation wastage in the Lower Lakes.
 - b. Re-engineer Menindee Lakes to reduce evaporation.
 - c. Invest in on farm water saving techniques.

We reserve the right to make more comments when we are able to properly consider both volumes 1 and 2 of the MDBP.

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President

Wayne Chaffey
Secretary/Treasurer