

Submission Number: 159

Date Received: 7/12/2010



Re: Submission to the House Standing Committees inquiry into the impact of the Murray Darling Basin Plan in Regional Australia

Please accept my submission in response to the proposed Basin Plan. I write to you as a concerned local citizen, business owner and father of a young and growing family frightened about our future.

Together with my two brothers (Jeff and Greg) I operate a successful office supplies business with stores, employing a total of 15 staff, in three locations affected by the proposed Basin Plan (Griffith, Echuca and Leeton). Jeff and I, along with our wives are also proud owners of residential property in Griffith.

The effect of the proposed cuts on our business would be devastating. We service local businesses ranging from farmers, small home based operators, agri-businesses and retailers all the way through to our international renowned local wineries. When these businesses experience a reduction in the need of their products their need for our products and services diminishes too. In the month following the release of the draft Basin Plan alone sales fell significantly as customers worried about the future of our region and their businesses. Actually cut our regions water entitlements and the long term drop in sales means a profitable business that contributes to government many hundreds of thousands of dollars in tax in GST, PAYG and Income Tax would run at a loss, staff would be laid off and our considerable investment of time, money and hard work destroyed. On top of this loss we would also suffer major declines in the value of our residential property as people leave our city for opportunities elsewhere (a situation that anecdotally is already occurring due to the draft plans release).

It is plainly obvious to the community that the facts, figures and models contained in the Draft Basin Plan are flawed. To suggest that the impact of the cuts would result in the loss of only 800 jobs across the entire basin shows how appalling the modeling is. To have our futures put on hold and the value of our assets we've worked hard to earn diminished because of such a flawed document and process sickens us.

I urge the honorable members of the House Standing Committee to ensure that minimizing the socio-economic impact on all of our community is the primary consideration in any water reform undertaken. Furthermore I call for the Committee to reject the option of buying irrigators water entitlements and instead let the considerable water savings and buy backs that have already been achieved take effect outside of a drought period. If further savings are still found to be required for river/environmental health after these flows are given time to work then our governments and its statutory bodies should look to make them through intelligent investment in water infrastructure that makes the system more efficient and effective.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my submission.

Regards

Michael Harris