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Committee Secretary

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia

PO Box 6021 – Parliament House

CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: MURRAY DARLING BASIN AUTHORITY DRAFT PLAN

This is only the second time in my life that I have written to a politician, and I am 55 years old. The first time was regarding the sale of crown land to Woolworths, so that they could build a Big W here and employ a couple of hundred people. The reason I mention this is because when the draft plan was released Woolworths got cold feet and now may not come here.

It is obvious to me that the people behind this plan have either no idea or little concern for the consequences of their plan.

Several years ago water allocations were cut by 20%. We have just come through 10 years of drought, losing over 2000 skilled people and professionals in the process. Farmers have been dealt blow upon blow and yet, they take it on the chin. This draft plan is the line in the sand. We are now fighting for, not only our livelihoods, but also the very existence of small town NSW.

I work for a retail clothing store which employs 11 full-time, 5 part-time and 2 casual employees. This family owned business began in Moree in 1938. This business relies largely on the agricultural sector and is well supported by the local aboriginals who make up 19.4% of our population.

Moree is a strong and resilient community. Just recently we had an article in the local 'Moree Champion' announcing the opening of four new businesses. Because we rely so much on the fortunes of the local farmers, how long do you think they will survive if more water is taken from the farmers?

This science behind this plan is flawed. Contrary to what maps show the Gwydir does not flow into the Barwon river. The Gwydir is a closed system which flows into a local wetland. It is a healthy river. In our district there will be almost no benefits to the environment because there are already enough environmental flows which are not even fully used. Government takes the easy way out and buys up water licences instead of investing in infrastructure.

Since the last water cut we have been adversely affected. We are already struggling with not enough doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals. Numbers are down in schools which affects the number of teachers employed which then affects the quality of education. People are then forced to send their children away to boarding schools which then leads to out of town shopping. It is a vicious cycle which will only be exaggerated if this unsound plan is put into action.

I appeal to your common sense. Don't just take the word of the Murray Darling Basin Authority. Find out the facts for yourself. Facts like, our local economy stands to lose an estimated 200-300 million dollars; estimated job losses of up to 7.6%. That is, one in 13 people currently employed, which will cause our population to drop another 9.6% or one in 10 people leaving the district. We cannot fall back on eco-tourism or mining. WE ARE AN AGRICULTURAL AREA!!

This plan will depopulate rural NSW. It will cause food and beverage prices to increase. It will further congest city roads and neighbourhoods. Existing resources will be strained even further. We want to live in the country. Make sure that communities like Moree continue to exist.

Yours faithfully

Larry Williams

Narelle Williams