



To the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia,

I am a young researcher undertaking my doctorate in agro-ecology and conservation biology at The University of New England, Armidale, N.S.W. On top of my own professional interests in the interface between agriculture and the natural environment, I also have much personal interest in sustainable agricultural practices. My family run a mixed dry-land farming operation in North West N.S.W., north of Moree. Myself and my brother are the 4th generation of our family to be involved in the farming operation. It is with this professional and personal interest that I fervently support the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, and the buy-back of water licenses from irrigators.

Irrigation is not a viable long term agricultural practice for the Australian landscape. Australia is the second driest continent on earth, second to Antarctica. It is only with Australia's mix of alluvial and phosphorus rich soils that we are capable of being such a large producer of many food and fibre crops. For the reason that I have just stated and with the ongoing threat of climate change, it is not practical for the Australian government to support irrigation. Australia is already a dry continent and climate change may mean regions will become even more so. This is an important point to consider as irrigation reduces overland flow of water, of which dry-land farmers depend on.

The Australian Government needs to recognize that regional townships have been suffering for a long time, and this has little to do with agriculture. Yes, mechanization has resulted in less agricultural employment, but this will only continue as Australia becomes more wealthy, and hence more efficient. Regional towns have been suffering due to the city-centric funding model that governments have employed in the past. The Australian Government needs to consider a bottom-up approach to solving the issue of dwindling regional communities; to support regional communities by allocating funding for better education and health facilities, not by supporting an unsustainable form of agriculture.

The Australian Government also ought to consider the need to support research and development into more efficient and sustainable agricultural practices. For example, I have recently finished my preliminary literature review for my doctorate, and very little of my citations come from Australian research. The negative effects of agricultural intensification and climate change are better understood in the Northern Hemisphere, largely because of greater population density than Australia. However I would argue that it is because regions such as North America and Europe have a greater awareness of these issues due to their Governments significant financial contributions to research. The Australian Government has a fantastic opportunity through the Murray-Darling Buy Back Scheme to acknowledge the effects of two of today's greatest issues: agricultural intensification and climate change. Moreover, you have the opportunity to not only acknowledge these issues, but to create positive change by focusing on developing more sustainable agricultural practices.

Yours sincerely,

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