

The Council of the
SHIRE OF BREWARRINA

All communications to be addressed to the General Manager



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OUR REF: BJC R3-7
YOUR REF:

Mr Glenn Worthington
Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on
Regional Australia
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

Submission No:	222
Date Received:	13/12/10
Secretary:	Sc

Dear Mr Worthington,

Submission: Impact of the proposed Murray-Darling Basin Plan on the Shire of Brewarrina and its residents

In making this submission, Council has considered the needs of its residents and submits the following comments on the terms of reference on the direct and indirect impact of the Proposed Basin Plan on regional communities, including agricultural industries, local business activity and community wellbeing;

Brewarrina Shire Council is located in North Western NSW, approximately 780 kilometres from Sydney and provides water services to the town communities of Brewarrina and Goodooga. The Aboriginal Land Council is responsible for provision of water to Wyaliba Village, near Weilmoringle, a section of the village of Gongolgon and the Barwon Four community - located adjacent to the Barwon River, near the town of Brewarrina.

The village of New Angledool has no village water supply, relying upon privately owned tanks and dams.

The Brewarrina Shire has an unemployment rate of 12.4% compared to the NSW average of 5.9%. NSW Office of Liquor Gaming and Racing in its February 2009 report, cited Brewarrina as a most disadvantaged socio-economic community, using an index of relative socio-economic disadvantage. Brewarrina Shire has a 60% Indigenous population, according to census records, with trends indicating that this figure will increase. The Council believes that, as many indigenous residents do not complete the census, the indigenous population figures across the Local Government Area are under-reported. It believes that the indigenous population percentage is closer to 70%. Whether or not this latter estimate is supported by next year's census outcomes, Brewarrina's Local Government Area has the highest indigenous population percentage in the State of NSW.

Brewarrina Shire Council is committed to ensuring that the Indigenous communities within the Brewarrina LGA have sustainable water supplies into the future. Water supply for communities of the Brewarrina Shire is described in the table below;



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Town	Population	Indigenous % of Population	Water Source
Brewarrina	1458	59%	Barwon River
New Angledool	16	6%	Narran River
Goodooga	400	98%	Bokhara River
Gongolgon	10	60%	Bogan River
Weilmoringle	60	90%	Bore Water

Agriculture Production

Brewarrina's main industry is agricultural including cattle, sheep, goat, dry and cropping and irrigation production. Agriculture is the single largest contributor to the local economy, Council recognises the needs of agricultural producers in relation to the proposed Murray-Darling Basin Plan. It also supports the Plan concept in terms of maximising river flows to preserve the environment and health of the rivers and billabongs.

Over-allocation of water, in Queensland particularly, has had negative impacts upon Brewarrina's rivers and floodplains in recent times. Council welcomes measures that will contribute to restoration of natural flows in the north of NSW that will allow pasture, floodplain and billabong and lake regeneration as well as preservation of native flora.

Recommendation; Murray Darling Basin Authority prioritise water allocations to natural pastures and historical floodplains.

Indigenous Significance

Brewarrina Council recognises that water is culturally significance for Aboriginal people who have ancient cultural ties to the Brewarrina Shire. The Murray-Darling Basin Plan will have an impact on the Indigenous value of waterways in our LGA that should be further explored through interaction and consultation with indigenous organisations, community elders, groups and individuals.

Recommendation; Murray Darling Basin Authority undertake further consultation with Indigenous communities on the impact of the proposed MDBP.

Socio-economic Impacts

Council recognises the need for the Murray-Darling Basin Plan to propose sustainable water ecology and maintain the health of the basin for future generations, however, consideration must be given to the socio-economic health of communities within the basin.

Council recognises that cost-efficient water conservation and demand management delivers significant environmental and social benefits and reduces capital and operating costs. Demand management is driven through pricing and will potentially create a financial barrier for some of our already disadvantaged residents.

Recommendation; Murray Darling Basin Authority address the potential of financial disadvantage to communities by seeking financial assistance from the Federal and State Governments to assist individuals and communities who are at risk of being financially disadvantaged.

Council advocates for increased production, industry and jobs within our LGA in order to provide essential jobs. This will assist to overcome disadvantage and to help 'close the gap' for our indigenous population. Restricting water allowances to towns and villages will be counter productive and is untenable.

Recommendation; Murray Darling Basin Authority supports Council's bid to remove the 820ML town water restriction proposed for Brewarrina.



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Council does not support a reduction in licence allocations that will threaten existing or future production, industry or employment opportunities.

Recommendation; Murray Darling Basin Authority recommend to the Federal and State Governments that financial assistance to small business and agricultural producers is required to install alternate water saving infrastructure to maintain current production standards and that will assist to achieve future economic growth.

Council engaged consultants who are investigating how Council can achieve greater efficiency in utilising its scarce resources whilst providing and maintaining quality water and sewer services to its communities. Consultation is being undertaken in Goodooga, during December 2010 to ascertain community opinion and preference. Brewarrina town residents will also be consulted on the following issues;

- Dispense with a dual water system and move to single filtered and metered system
- Upgrade both raw and filtered water infrastructure in Brewarrina and Goodooga, install metres and retain and maintain into the future.
- Retain both systems but dispense with raw water systems as infrastructure requires replacement
- Install of water saving irrigation devices for public recreation spaces within the Shire

Recommendation; Murray Darling Basin Authority recommend to the Federal and State Governments that financial assistance be provided to Councils to implement the water saving techniques.

Council believes that engineering technologies can be improved to deliver significant water savings that will allow the retention of sufficient and secure water allocations that will encourage business development within the towns and villages.

Recommendation; Murray Darling Basin Authority investigate Federal or State Government funding to;

- **Improve water efficiencies and reduce water evaporation on the Menindee Lakes. This can be achieved by increasing lake depth for one or more lakes where required.**
- **Deliver water supply via covered channels or pipes to prevent seepage and evaporation loss**
- **100% water grants to install home rainwater tanks to encourage water self-sufficiency**
- **100% water grants for Councils to install rainwater tanks on public buildings, reserves, sporting grounds and parklands to encourage water self-sufficiency**
- **Provision and installation of water efficient pipes and irrigation devices, as required, in public access reserves, parks and gardens**

Brewarrina Shire Council thanks the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Murray Darling Basin Plan and advises that Council is available to make further comment if required.

Yours sincerely

Glenda Tasker
General Manager
9th December 2010



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