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The Secretary  
House Standing Committee on Regional Australia

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Dear Sirs

## INQUIRY INTO THE IMPACT OF THE MURRAY-DARLING BASIN PLAN IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

The current proposals to reduce further Canberra's water resources are an absurd betrayal of the hopes of those who founded this city as a garden city.

The ACT gives away downstream and free of charge some 97% of its average annual inflows – and for this, the people of Canberra are to be punished!

There is no scarcity of water in the ACT. Official reports from ACTEW's Future Water Options project documented that the ACT has enough water for a million people while still meeting the then (very large and probably excessive) environmental flow requirements.

“The ACT is therefore water rich relative to its population. It has **enough water** under ACT control to meet the environmental requirements and **to supply more than a million people** but storage is currently limited.” (*Future Water Options report: “An Assessment of the need to increase the ACT’s Water Storage”, December 2004, Executive Summary*  
<http://www.actew.com.au/futurewateroptions/documents/assessmentReport.pdf>

“More than adequate volumes of water fall in, and flow through the ACT in average terms... The issue is to have an adequate supply to tide us over during periods of drought.” The ACT uses only “6% of the total available resource”. (*Next Steps to Ensure Water Supply for the ACT Region p 6*

[http://www.thinkwater.act.gov.au/more\\_information/documents/WaterSecurityreportweb.pdf](http://www.thinkwater.act.gov.au/more_information/documents/WaterSecurityreportweb.pdf)

Canberra’s current water supply infrastructure was designed “for a population of 450,000 and limited environmental flows **without recourse to water restrictions in the worst of droughts**” (Report for Engineers Australia, *Augmentation of Water Supply to the ACT and Region* December 2003 p ii)

All that has happened since these reports is that the human use water allocation in the ACT has been savagely reduced for no good reason by ideological fanaticism while Melbourne has started to drain 90 Gigs out of the Murray Darling Basin and Adelaide continues to do so – neither city is in the Basin yet they are pulling 10 to 15 times more water out of it than Canberra, Australia’s largest inland city, uses.

Meanwhile 2000 Gigalitres a year is wasted through evaporation in an artificial freshwater lake created at the Murray’s mouth.

The whole thing is devoid of social or economic or environmental logic. In offering a comment on the current Murray-Darling proposals, I can do no better than quote Turgot, the famous French economist and Minister of Finance, who remarked “It is the author, not the project, which should be executed”.

I attach a copy of a talk I gave on ACT water abuses by government. If you require further information I should be pleased to assist.

Yours faithfully

Dr Terence Dwyer

**Terry Dwyer** *B.A. (Hons) B.Ec. (Hons) (Syd.) M.A. Ph.D. (Harvard), Dip. Law (Syd.), FTIA*

*Dwyer Lawyers*

*Suite 4, Level 6  
CPA Australia Building  
161 London Circuit  
CANBERRA CITY  
ACT 2601*

**Postal address:**  
*GPO Box 2529  
CANBERRA CITY  
ACT 2601  
AUSTRALIA*