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Tony, I admire your fiercely independent stand as a politician and would like your opinion on what should be done with the Murray-Darling water problem. I irrigated in Northern Victoria for years some time ago and was appalled by the amount of waste in flood irrigation so attempted to water at night when possible thus saving plenty but losing lots of sleep ( a fair trade in my opinion). I reckon I used 35-40% less water that way as the bills got smaller by the year even when water costs rose. If the Murray-Darling was flushed properly then tree cover would increase, shade would be provided and evaporation decreased; Lake Alexandrina in SA would return to health once a decent flow was re-established in the Murray thus returning jobs and wealth to the area, the farming communities on the Darling would be able to increase production and provide jobs, and the whole of the system would provide tourism dollars and taxes to the country. The whole premise rests on better, more efficient irrigation practices, drip or underground piping to crops, covered channels with weed control or pipe-fed outlets to farms etc.; the costs of infrastructure would be vast but could be shared by the States and end-users as well as the Commonwealth and would ultimately give us control over waste in irrigation. The place to start might well be in the Queensland Cotton Industry by legislating that their irrigation *must be underground*, their channels must be covered or replaced by piping, and spray-irrigation should be banned where it is not an absolute necessity for the crops being grown ( and I can't think of many crops requiring overhead water as opposed to underground; maybe some cut-flower crops and potatoes?). Driving through the South-West of Victoria I'm appalled by the water being wasted by overhead sprays for lucerne and rye-clover cattle-feed crops especially during hot weather when the evaporation rates are at their highest. A compulsory Federal Government sponsored education regimen should be instituted as a first step with farm inspections and strategic plans being required to assist farmers to follow Government recommendations; there should also be a farm assistance program set up to help push agriculture in the right direction. It's a big job requiring high levels of commitment from all parties but, as a former farmer, I'm sure you could set out a coherent plan which would save much of our Agricultural Industry and guarantee its future success. Any ideas or assistance I can provide is yours for the asking. As always, Yours sincerely, Hector McDonald.