

# HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

## INQUIRY INTO THE MURRAY DARLING BASIN PLAN

### PUBLIC HEARING – YOOGALI CLUB GRIFFITH (NSW)

25 JANUARY 2011 (8:45AM – 3:00PM)

<b>PUBLIC HEARING – YOOGALI CLUB GRIFFITH (NSW)</b>	Submission No: 255-1
Date Received:	25/1/11
Secretary:	SX

I have been asked by the membership of the ~~Murrumbidgee Valley Food and Fibre Association~~ to address on a number of issues which lay, outside of the Associations Written Submissions previously tendered to the Committee, yet are still germane to the wider issues now occupying this committee's attention.

Let me start with an analogy, it is a commonly known and accepted (especially in this part of the Country) that you don't pour new wine into old wineskins because as the new wine expands through the normal processes of fermentation the old wine skins inevitably burst and one is left with I believe what is called in laymen's terms 'a bloody big mess' to clean and perhaps worst of all - no wine to enjoy.

Arguably the same principles applies in relation to the 43<sup>rd</sup> Parliaments attempt through this committee's 'Terms of Reference' to inquire into the proposed basin plan. Let me put another way – a inquiry into a draft guide to the proposed Basin Plan when the original premise of the offending legislative instrument is fundamentally floored can only lead to the same inevitable consequence as using old wine skins – that being a 'bloody big mess'.

Why? Because the nature of the inquiry itself seeks to consider, the manner and form of the proposed draft guide and its effects. I submit that this Strategy is fundamentally floored as the Water Act on which the MDBA was governed was and remains fundamentally floored.



It is my assessment and a view held by a majority here today, that should the current egregiously unbalanced Commonwealth Water Act 2007, not be redrawn to reflect an equality of social, environmental and primary production needs...

...then a principal tenant of the Australian National Psyche... of what it means to be Australian, will be forever and irrevocably destroyed... that being the egalitarian spirit of "a fair go for all" no matter whether you are from the city or the bush, male or female or young or old.

A principle that proudly sets us aside internationally and stamps us forever as being Australians... A principle so sacred that it could be said to be the unwritten bulwark which underpins the Australian Constitution.

## **Constitutional Question**

A Constitution - which at section 100 arguably envisages and invests both joint and severable **State and Individual** rights to 'reasonable use of water of rivers for conservation and irrigation purposes'.

Of course until a formal Basin Plan is released, such a Constitutional question must necessarily remain untested. But if no changes are made it will be the Courts who determine if the Parliament has overstepped its power.

## **This Is Beyond Self Interest**

Make no Mistake, there is a cancerous belief that has been mutating, metastising and now morphing into the public conscience that it is only those who directly have 'future' water allocation at risk who are concerned by the proposed Water Plan. Here today, like in Murray Bridge, Mildura, Bendigo and Shepperton before us, Committee Members will have seen that it is whole regions, towns and communities that standing together and not individual self interest driving our resolve for action.

Such cancerous ideas are a potent and deliberate attempt to minimise the issue, fractionalises the national community and turn this debate away from the creation of a grand and encompassing vision for water management that is worthy of a Country whose environment rolls regularly from **debilitating drought** to the **inundation of floodwaters**, and as we have seen in 2010/11 often only within weeks or months of each other.

## **We Need To Ask The Right Question / We Need To Understanding the Question**

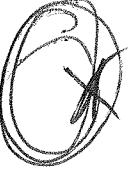
A review of the legislation itself, clearly shows that apart from the water trading aspects the legislation, the Water Act solely deals with issues within the Murray-Darling basin by way of creation of the MDBA and the requirements to establish an associated Murray-Darling Water Plan.

Make no mistake; Water... along with privacy will in my view be two of the biggest issues which Australia and humanity has a whole have to grapple as we hurtle towards the middle of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. And any attempt to deal with only one small geographic section of water management must be necessarily be rejected as short sighted and not in the national best interest.

Rather we need to establish a truly national approach to Water Management. We need a National Water Initiative which shares equally the burden of water consumption and use on all our communities and adequately funds the necessary infrastructure to make national water management not a pipe dream, but a gift that our children's children will remember us for as being visionary.

**The amount of water in our world does not change, only its structure and context does... Currently**

- ✓ 69.6% of global water (or 6.44 million trillion gallons) is frozen in ice sheets, glaciers, permanent snow cover and permafrost.
- ✓ 0.3% of global water (31,2341 trillion gallons) is located in lakes, rivers and wetlands.
- ✓ 30.1% of global water (2.78 million trillion gallons) are beneath the ground in soil and aquifers feed by surface seepage.

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- ✓ It is estimated that the planet has at any one time 9.25 million trillion gallons of fresh water.
  - ✓ We live on a planet covered by water, but 97 % is salty, and nearly 2% is locked up in snow and ice. That leaves less than 1% to grow our crops, cool our power stations and supply drinking and bathing water for households (sources Available)

As the world population increases, humanity will need to be fed, bathed, engaged in manufacture and have palatable water for consumption and all this with the same 1% of water.

We must position ourselves and ensure we are asking ourselves the right questions, with the most conclusive supportive data to support our ultimate action, because failing to do so, will have dire national and global consequences.

We need to look towards new technologies for the desalination of salt water and towards effective mechanisms to capture, manage and redirect water.

Sir William Hudson (Chief Engineer) of the **Snowy Mountains Scheme** created the current complex network of dams, pumping station and 225 kilometers of tunnels, pipelines and aqueducts which today remain the largest engineering project undertaken in Australia history. We stand today at a junction in history, when we can look to the easy option of simply closing down whole communities or we can dare to dream a vision to drought proof this great south land and prepare it for the our nation's food and financial security for generations to come.

## **Water Our Life Blood / A Fight Worth Winning**

Water is the lifeblood of our very humanity with the human body itself being made of approximately 60% of water, the battle for water and the right to control it is already turning violent.

Just 3 weeks ago my 12 year old daughter and I witness what I can only describe a frenzy as we witness thousands of men and women and children desperate to obtain fresh water into New Delhi in India.

In parts of Africa women can walk up to 4 hours to fetch water by hand.

We use water not only for our very physical subsistence, but it is intrinsically linked with our rituals and our recreation.

The communities, families and children of the Murray-Darling Basin ask no more than that the same rules apply to them as the rest of the country. That Water allocations that were paid for by hard work and tears be respected and generations of families be able to continue to grow the highest quality produce to feed our region, the country and the world.

Committee Members... the Water Act 2007 as it currently stands was an anomaly of its time. A misguided and mismanaged mistake, which now must be fixed. We need, **no, we must have** a new national strategy which looks at water management across Australia as a whole. Dams, Pipes, Rivers and a Vision to ensure that nowhere in Australia are individuals, communities or regions left behind because of a failure by government to understand the very question of the problem it was presented with.

We are not the first to have to deal with this issue and in the decades ahead we must accept that if we **vision and appropriately fund** for the future we can ensure the security of food production, the environment, our fisheries, rivers and wetlands **all** in their entirety.

We ask, that as you reflect on the material before you that you agree to advise the House that the current legislation **cannot** be allowed to stand and to in its place recommend the establishment of a bipartition Commonwealth Commission of Enquiry (or Royal Commission) tasked with the establishment of a single national water vision through the consolidation of data and applying international best practice.

Such a commission would within 2 years examine and recommend a single set of strategies moving forward which appropriately and perhaps for the first time asked the right questions.