



Submission – Guide to the Draft of the Proposed MDB Plan

Background

My family based business works two properties in the Conargo area irrigating with access to both groundwater and surface water sources. My wife, son, one full time and two part time employees conduct the day to day operations.

Since commencing irrigated agriculture in 1973 we have endeavoured to continually update and improve the water efficiency of our operation.

Our enterprise has a mixed farming base with rice, soft wheat, grazing cereals, fat lambs and wool.

Like all people in this region we have serious concerns about the guide as presented to the community meetings.

Our concerns

The continual reference to “over allocated” water is totally incorrect. Irrigators now have an entitlement against which State Government Water Departments allocate water on an annual basis depending on water availability.

Murray Irrigation entitlement holders have, in the past 5 irrigation seasons, received the following **allocations**:

2005/6	8%
2006/7	0%
2007/8	0%
2008/9	9%
2009/10	34%

These figures do not represent over allocation.

Other concerns which we have are:

- The majority of research data has been collected from 2004 -2007 during a severe drought. This is not typical of water availability.
- Most information implies that “climate change” is a major factor affecting water resources availability; I feel that the influence of the drought has been overlooked.
- I have not found a clear definition of what constitutes a wetland for the purposes of the MDBP.
- It is totally unacceptable to have a manmade wetland as the Lower Lakes in South Australia is classified as an icon site.

- What research has been done to gauge the impact on the environment if the barrages were removed? How much less fresh water would evaporate if the barrages were removed?
- What effect have nearby large scale drainage works had on local inflows to the Coorong and Lower lake system
What effects do excavation works connected with developments on Hindmarsh Island on the capacity of the lower lakes?
- Similar research should be carried out on all large shallow water storages including Menindee Lakes.
- No assessment of possible water saving practices to minimize the current water losses for all requirements of the Basin e.g. piping, lining and covering supply channels.
- Construction type of on farm storages throughout the northern parts of the Basin must be addressed to minimize losses
- Many levee banks have been constructed that change the flow patterns of all river systems within the Basin. A large area of floodplains is now cut off from the rivers creating extra flows downstream therefore an artificial amount of water at the lower end of the system
- The Ramsar agreements need to be readdressed to relate to the real situation not a knee jerk reaction by government to appear to have “green” credentials.
- Water buy backs are not beneficial for local communities as the bulk of the proceeds are spent out of the areas.
- Infrastructure upgrades enable irrigators with the ability to produce more from less water and provide work for local contractors carrying out these works. Communities are the big winners!
- The guide’s conclusion that only 800 jobs will be lost is ridiculous! The flow on effect will be in the thousands not only in the Basin but throughout Australia. The drought induced closure of the Sunrice mill in Deniliquin cost 180 direct jobs with at least as many associated job losses.
- The flow on effects is the loss of families in the area means teachers, police, childcare workers are not required. Businesses have to lay off staff and do not employ apprentices sending our youth to the cities.
- ABARE concludes jobs will be created to do infrastructure upgrades. This will replace long term established jobs and families with short term jobs.
- Bureau of Statistics figures claim the value of irrigated production rose with limited water during the drought. This was due to higher prices caused by low production. Nothing to do with extra production with less water!
- There is no indication of how environmental water will be used or the benefits for the environment will be measured

Conclusion

The above points I believe are only some of the relevant issues related to be considered when formulating the Draft Plan for the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

The Plan will impact directly on 10% of the population of Australia. Indirectly all of Australia will be affected. Are the people of Australia prepared to pay much higher prices for imported food due the demise of local industries? (We are continually reminded about impending food shortages) Do these same people want to see efficient regional area, their towns and people turned into struggling communities (Those who are left and have not added to the already problems of the urban sprawl and infrastructure problems)?

I think not!!

What they want is to be told the **truth** (not the personal opinions of some in the scientific community who seem to have an agenda to ruin regional Australia). There is a solution out there which should be based on **sound science and common sense** and will give the triple bottom line result of

Healthy rivers
Profitable irrigated agriculture
Vibrant regional communities

Thank you for the opportunity to write a submission on the Guide to the Draft for the Murray Darling Basin Plan

Yours faithfully

Colin Bull