

16th December 2010

MDBA
GPO Box 3001
Canberra ACT 2601

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Dear Mr Taylor and MDBA,

My name is Laura Andreazza, I am 14 years old and just finished completing year 9 at Wade High school in Griffith Riverina, New South Wales.

I have grown up and lived on a farm my whole life, I am one of four children in my family, my father dropped out of year 10 at the age of 16, to begin farming, and has continued to work the farm his whole life, providing the whole of Australia with food. Even though he did not finish school, he has become an extremely successful businessman, with great goals and ambitions. My mother has given her whole life to support us children and my father in his passion and career. My parents are extremely dedicated and hard working, working ridiculous hours and still managing to be, literally the best parents in the whole world and providing us with every opportunity possible.

Along with my family, I attended the MDBA meeting in Griffith on the 14th of October 2010, I think you were able to see at this meeting what damage you have already done with your thick book of nonsense. How do you expect anyone to actually read that?? Sometimes, decisions don't have to be based solely on figures and facts; sometimes it just takes a bit of common sense, which you all clearly lack. You may be thinking that I am only 14 and wouldn't understand, but let me tell you, you are only bureaucrats living in the city, who have probably never even stepped foot on a farm, **WHAT WOULD YOU KNOW ABOUT IT!???** How can you honestly expect us to trust you and think that you understand what you are actually doing? I challenge you to live the life of a farmer for just 1 year, (an extremely challenging, tiring, stressful job... a real job) you might then see what it is like, and how much water you need to actually be able to grow a decent crop and earn enough money to actually buy food!!!

It is clear that you all really don't care, technically, I don't blame you, I can only imagine the kind of money you will receive for ruining the whole of the Riverina and the lives and hard work of my family, I don't see anyone providing you with a book, explaining exactly how they are going to take 43% of your income, passion, hard work and life... so, why would you care??!! It is also clear that you are not listening, if you had of opened your ears and eyes for a few seconds at our meeting, you would have seen that Griffith is not going down without a fight! Can't you see how hard everyone here has worked to get where they are? Did you not listen to anything people were saying? Ok, yes, you have extended the consultation period, but that's not what we asked for. I heard several people tell you to go back to Canberra and report that this plan is a total disaster and waste of time, and that it should be scrapped immediately. You should be looking for ways to help the farmers; think of other ways to save the rivers, there has to be more!!!! You are just being stubborn, I feel like you're not really listening, just like all the rest of our politicians, you are just going through the motions and picking up your extremely large pay at the end.

When I was younger, I remember spending a lot of time with Dad on the tractor, my older brother and I also loved to play and run through our crops. Harvest was my favourite time of the year, it was busy and my parents were always stressed, but I loved it more than anything! Years later, I struggle to remember these simple things that made me happy, simply because it has been so long since we have had a stressful, busy good crop to harvest. I have forgotten what it was like to sit on the header with my dad, and worse, I have almost lost interest! Finally this year we could look out the window and begin to prepare for a great crop. This year we were a little excited, finally we thought we would get a decent cash flow, even if it was just for one crop. Then all of a sudden, right when the crop is ready to be stripped, rain pours down, and within days rivers are flooding and towns are under water. Our crop was completely destroyed and after years of having no crop, we have yet another failure and a great loss of money. Does your pay ever rely solely on the weather??? So, because I am only fourteen, and probably don't understand, explain to me,

now that rivers are flooding, WHERE ARE YOU ACTUALLY GOING TO PUT THE WATER YOU ARE TAKING? More to the point, what river actually needs the water now? Did you not complete geography at school? Did you not learn that at the end of a drought there are floods, and after that things go back to normal, and years later the cycle starts again, because the environment can actually take care of itself? You can not accuse me of not understanding this, because I just finished learning it last week!

We have struggled for as long as I can remember; my memories of good farm life are very vague. Everyone I know owns and runs a farm, and many people I know have committed suicide due to these last few years. I can't emphasize enough the damage you are doing. You have no idea! Have you ever had to miss out on things, argue with your family because you are stressed and upset, attend friends funerals because they could no longer take the pain, all because of the weather, and sometimes, ignorant bureaucrats from Canberra???? Finally things are looking ok, and you all feel the need to just add to that pressure and stress, as if farmers haven't already been through enough? Where is your head? How can you not see this? Your numbers are nearly all wrong, you would have to know it; my 9 year old sister understands and recognises it, like your ridiculous number of 800 job losses. If a 9 year old can see it, what is wrong with you? Are you so over educated that you can't see how the world around you works? I can almost guarantee you that you have at some stage eaten food that has been provided from my very own farm, how are you going to replace that?

As you can tell, I am a very honest proud person, I can see things the way they are with my own eyes and brain, I know you are highly educated and think you know more than us "bogan farmers", but we know how to look after the environment, you are just ruining Australia! My 6 month old cousin has already achieved greater things than you!

I don't think there is any explanation for your stupidity, the only thing I can bring it down to is that you don't care, or simply don't understand. If you were really listening and looking into things, we wouldn't have to write to you and tell you how this has affected our town, you would just know! My advice to you is get a real job! Why don't you try building something, like my father has, rather than destroy something that another person has tirelessly worked for and created? You should be ashamed!

My message is clear, you are ruining lives, yes, your family will clearly never be affected by anything like this, but if you had a real heart you would actually think for a second, put yourself in a farmers shoes and actually care about what YOUR actions are going to do to their lives. I can guarantee you that if this goes through, lives will be changed forever, how can anyone have hope and optimism when you keep pushing their opportunities into the ground?

My last question is why do you get to make this decision anyway? You have nothing to do with farming; you live in a city and have no idea about our region and water. Do you really think the farmer's sole intention is to ruin the environment? Let me tell you, they are not money hungry like you, producers are people who make things and provide them for others, clearly they would care about the environment, considering that is how they make their money every year, clearly, and they care about others!

To your surprise, my intention of this letter is not to throw around insults, but to show you how upset I am, how passionate I am, and how much my family needs you to see things in a different way. I just want to be able to see my parents happy again; doesn't every child have that right? I just want to have a normal life, and for my parents to have a half normal job without this stress and constant worry. I thought everyone had the right to choose their own personal career, and opportunities within that career shouldn't be taken from them. I just want to be happy again on the farm, like I was when I was younger!

I am an EXTREMELY proud daughter; I think very few people in this world could do what my parents have done, under these conditions. I don't have time to tell you all their achievements, and to be honest I have doubts that you will actually read this letter anyway, so I'm not going to bother wasting my time. I would just like you to know that this is my life, here on the farm, this is my dad's life, and both my grandparents, and great grandparents.

You are right in a way, I don't understand. I don't understand your intentions, what is going through your head; I don't understand your stupidity, or your ignorance. I don't understand why you guys in Canberra are able to make decisions for us here and I definitely don't understand your ridiculous reasons for this guide, considering there are floods all over NSW. What I do understand is the damage you have done, the stress you have placed on my family, and how a farm actually runs.

Because you went to university and studied for years, because you have a piece of paper and high pay role, you ridiculously get to decide my future and that of my family. We have established that this decision may never affect you, but I ask you for a second to grow a heart, and perhaps a brain. Look beyond the money you will receive for your mass destruction, look into a farmer's eyes, and make the right decision. Why not work hard for one second of your life and find a plan that will actually suit everyone. Scrap this giant waste of paper, and start doing something good for once in your life. You never know, people might actually respect you for doing something that might actually help others.

Laura Andreazza