



## Resolving MDB water issues

Dear Mr Windsor

This letter was originally sent to the Murray -Darling Basin Authority but now that you and a parliamentary committee are looking at the issue I think it more important and appropriate that it be submitted to you. I believe and hope that it will be considered in a favourable light and that a lot of good will come from your review not just in the short term but for centuries to come.

I would welcome the opportunity to appear before any public hearing to be both heard and questioned on the issue.

I am very strongly of the view that this is a golden opportunity to put forth recommendations for the permanent advancement of this portion of Australia whilst at the same time resolving the two most pressing issues involved with water in the MDB :-

- 1 Water for the environment
- 2 Retaining the structure and value of all communities within the Basin.

This opportunity will only be available during the course of current events.

Once a decision is made and implementation is under way it is highly unlikely there will be further opportunity to revisit the issue for a long period of time. An imperative for getting it right.

Australia is blessed with copious quantities of many minerals and compounds. It is even endowed with considerable quantities of water, despite having the reputation of the driest continent on earth. The major downside is that it is very poorly distributed both in location and timing. It is principally confined to the perimeter of the continent. It is mostly confined to the wet summer months as monsoonal rainfall with the exception of snow on the southern alps of the great dividing range.

Australian ingenuity needs to come to the fore once again in redressing nature's shortcoming.

This can be achieved by dams and diversions from the North of the continent where Monsoonal rains cause flooding and run back to the sea with out being used.

To take a small percentage of say 15% or 20% will not cause any environmental problems in the area from which it is taken.

A starting point could well be the Burdekin/Herbert rivers. This was the starting point of a scheme proposed by Dr J J C Bradfield in the 1930's and more recently by an engineer by the name of Terry Bowring.

Taking of 4,000Gigalitres would represent 14% of a typical years monsoonal downpour as this region is recognised as the wettest area of Australia. The township of Tully records an average 3200 mm.

We have had some wonderful achievements in the past: the Snowy Mountains scheme, Ord River scheme . It is time for another major one.

The development of our most precious commodity, after air, water.

For future prosperity we need to give it top priority. With you and your Committee's support and initiative by recommending a start I am sure many of the populace will recognise the benefits and support you wholeheartedly.

Even if it is ultimately rejected you will still be able to take pride in being applauded and recognised for taking such a positive approach and someone else can cop the flak for failing to do it.

I am confident that if you make such a recommendation it will carry significant influence, coming from a body charged with the specific task of seeking a solution.

It will be a comfort to people of regional communities to know that someone recognises and respects us for what we are and has put a case forward for our benefit.

### **Cost/Benefit Analysis**

I have held the view for sometime that conventional cost/benefit analysis is not always appropriate. This view was recently reinforced when The Hon. Tony Windsor M.P. also made the observation when addressing another public issue. He made the point that things that are done in the public interest for the good of the community, cost/ benefit analysis should not be a consideration.

The only relevance is the question 'is it affordable?' at the time.

In the case of water development projects that have a virtually limitless life and benefits to both the environment and the people living in that environment it should only be a question of funding.

It is probably reasonable to suggest that 'a back of an envelope' calculation to ensure that the proposal isn't outrageous.

In doing a 'rough' calculation I would ask that you take a few recently quoted figures into account.

1. A value to the environment of the additional water to the environment prepared by Dr Arlene Harris Buchan of the Australian Conservation Foundation ( and I believe a member of the Basin Community Committee) of \$2.1 bn /p.a.
2. A value of \$0.8 bn/p.a. ( ref. Pp xx exec summary of the MDBA Guide) as continued production value of the 3,000GL.
3. An asset value reduction of farming and town communities housing and property if water is taken out of production and employment is consequently reduced.
4. Cost to the taxpayer for providing for the unemployed.

### **Water Act 2007**

The Objects of the act at section 3(c) require the management of the water resources that ... optimises economic, social and environmental outcomes.

To argue that the Act places emphasis on the environment is not correct.

Whilst the preponderance of references throughout the document are about the prescription of managing the environment it nonetheless does not diminish the requirement for optimising it with the economic and social requirements.

The Objects at section 3 (h) also require the collection,collation, analysis and dissemination of information about:

- (i) Australia's water resources and
- (ii) the use and management of water in Australia.

Accordingly it is entirely appropriate to consider bringing excess water from the monsoonal North down into the Murray Darling basin and for that matter into the centre of Australia which will help relieve pressure on the Murray by removing the requirements for Adelaide from it.

## **The Barrages**

Whilst much of the discussion has revolved around the need for 'water for the environment' it has also included the notion that the extra water will be used to flush the Murray mouth opening to the sea.

I am perplexed by various arguments that the barrages in the lower lakes near the Murray mouth should remain when it is they that play a very significant role in restricting direct flow through the mouth to the sea.

It also occurs to me that 3,000 or 4,000 Gialitres is a huge amount of water to do a job that could be more economically achieved by either dredging or sand pumping without jeopardising the lives of many people even whole communities and restricting productive output from within the basin.

## **Concluding Remarks**

I am limited by time in getting this to you.

I enclose two other pages of notes that I have made at various times. They may be somewhat cryptic in places but I hope convey the fundamental meaning to you.

I reiterate that the basis for the future development of the Murray-Darling Basin and inland Australia is very dependent on water. There are times, as we have witnessed in recent years, when there has been major deficiency. Damming and diversions resolve this and associated issues.

# Murray-Darling Basin Plan

Submission by D.A. Woods

- Plan needs to be positive with ideas to increase the volume and availability of water to allow growth at least commensurate with the expansion of population.
- Diversion of Monsoonal rains from the North into the headwaters of the M-DB (resurrection of the Bradfield scheme or Bowring scheme, or Katter proposal or updated variants of them).
- Once implemented additional water can then be allocated to the environment without depleting Australia's inland communities or opportunity to remain a reliable supplier of food and fibre not only for Australians but to other parts of the world in particular to the Asian countries just to our north.
- Irrigation water should be allocated from the 'bottom up' ie everyone gets a base amount sufficient for a subsistence living with increasing amounts then allocated to larger properties as available quantities permit
  - Storage of large volumes for steady release to assist the environment
  - Only pay when water allocation takes place – zero allocation – zero payment
  - Flood Lake Torrens and/or Lake Eyre via channel from Spencer's Gulf
  - Solar evaporator/collectors
  - Geothermal evaporator/collectors
  - Geothermally powered pumping to towns and cities as appropriate
  - Desalination plant powered by HFR Geothermal electricity generators
  - Compulsory reductions be compensated at the average price paid for voluntary sales under the buyback scheme
- Cost benefit to include \$2.1 bn p.a. Value assigned by ACF Dr Arlene Harris-Buchan
- Any cost benefit analysis to use at least 100 years as time line, cost to the community of lost production from buyback or compulsory reductions, cost to the Govt of redundancies and job losses with consequent claims for social security, cost to the general community of devaluation of rural communities, housing , land, commercial businesses
- 24<sup>th</sup> Oct learned that Freeman has known for months about the Bowring plan.
- At NBI meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> he offered to do cost/benefit analysis of bringing water from North without any mention of Bowring. This indicates that he will either make sure his analysis fails or he isn't going to do one as he successfully fobbed me off.
- Inconsistency in that the Buyback scheme didn't have a cost benefit analysis done there hasn't been a cost benefit analysis by the MDBA of the extra water for the environment.
- The current situation isn't the fault of the irrigators If you want to lay blame on anyone it should be the Bureaucrats and/or politicians who approved of and granted licences before innocent farmers proceeded to spend money on infrastructure. If that's not double jeopardy I don't know what is.
- We gave it to you, we've made a mistake but you'll have to pay – tough luck.
- Does the MDBA want to be hated and despised or would it prefer to be liked and accepted even revered if it puts forward a recommendation that water diversion scheme/s be used to resolve the issue without interference to regional communities or irrigators

## MDBA – OPTIONS TO GENERATE ADDITIONAL WATER

1. Dam and Divert, by man made channels where necessary, not more than 25% of monsoonal rain water from the Burdekin/Herbert Rivers inland to the head of the Warrego River or Nive River to feed down into the Murray Darling. To yield at least 4,000GL for the environment.
2. Dam and Divert, by man made channels where necessary, not more than 25% of monsoonal rain water from Flinders, or Leichhardt river down into the Diamantina, or Thomson River thence Cooper Creek then unnamed dry lakes before being channelled to Adelaide to yield at least 2,000GL pa removing all dependence on the Murray and having another 2,000GL available for either the environment or other use.
3. Construct a channel from the northern tip of Spencers Gulf into Lake Torrens (50Km or less) and install solar evaporation /water condensers to supply Adelaide.
4. Alternative to solar is to use Geothermal heat to evaporate and condense fresh water from sea water.

### Funding

To fund either in part or whole - stop wasting money on buybacks and use it towards one or more of the diversion options. There are still billions available for buybacks and billions available for Infrastructure upgrades. The money for buybacks should be 1<sup>st</sup> priority for use whilst the money for upgrades is seen as advisable it may be far more beneficial to put it towards extra water from the North. Money saved on social security by not putting people out of work could also be directed to financing one or more of these schemes.

If the calculated value to the environment as calculated by Dr Arlene Harris-Buchan of the ACF is accepted then \$2.1bn/pa is available to pay off the capital outlay.