

Submission Number: 542

Date Received: 12/01/11

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Mr Tony Windsor
Chairman
Regional Australia Committee

Dear Mr Windsor,

The Board of Management for the Moira Private Irrigation District would like to appeal to your committee to inject an element of reason to the Murray Darling Plan debate. The plan has the potential to destroy a highly successful irrigation operation which has served its district for almost half a century.

MPID has been a major success story in this region. However, its future lies in its ability to at least retain its current level of licensed entitlement. Without it, the District, which has been responsible for the biggest single boost to agricultural production and land values in the region for 46 years would be adversely affected and could even be forced to close down. The District already faces the possibility of reduction to its licensed allocation through the new Water Market Rules which will enable members to transform their entitlement onto their own Water Access Licence and take it out of the District if they wish.

The loss of only a small amount of water could make the operation economically unviable. The less water there is to pump, the more it costs in electricity, and the greater the burden on the remaining members. The ramifications of losing 3000 or 4000 Gigalitres across the basin would be catastrophic .

In addition to throwing the lives and livelihood of our members into jeopardy, the flow-on effect of closure of the District to the region's agricultural industry and those which service it would be massive. It would also cause land values to plummet and employment opportunities to be significantly reduced. The mental health of our community, already in poor condition as a result of the prolonged drought, would be stretched to breaking point.

Water security is the one means the region has to attract investment, boost development and increase employment opportunities to underpin the local economy. The Basin is the food bowl of the nation and with population increasing world-wide, the ability to produce food is going to be of huge importance. If we

don't have water, we can't produce the best food in the world in the most efficient, economical and environmentally friendly manner.

We would appeal to the Regional Australia Committee to deliver our message loud and clear to Canberra so that our members, and their fellow irrigators are provided with the ability to recover from the long drought and to face the future with confidence.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you during your visit to Deniliquin on 24th January.

Our future is in your hands.

Kind Regards

Eileen Day

Secretary to the Board

11th January 2011-01-11

Moira Private Irrigation District – Our Story

The Moira Private Irrigation District (MPID) is a private entity which was established by farmers for farmers and began operating in 1965. The bulk water supply scheme was initiated, financed and constructed by a community of farming families and continues to be operated by the community for the community today. MPID's operation has brought about an amazing transformation of the district's landscape, turning what was effectively a dustbowl into a highly successful farming district. In addition to agricultural production worth an estimated \$19 million per annum, the introduction of irrigation provided a significant economical boost to suppliers and service industries, including agronomists, shearing and spraying contractors, transport operators, fertilizer suppliers and grain dealers.

The District draws its water from the Murray River via Moira Creek, a stream located between Picnic Point east of Mathoura, and north of Moama on the New South Wales/Victorian border. A forest lease was negotiated to enable construction and operation of an intake channel which follows a course around the southern edge of Moira Lake and across the flat country, bringing the water to the pump site. Here five large electric pumps lift it up an average of 13 metres to a pool located on top of the Cadell Fault, a geological phenomenon unique to the area. From the pool, located adjacent the headquarters site, it gravitates via 124 kilometres of channels and laterals to members' properties.

The Moira Private Irrigation District covers 42,500 hectares, catering for 77 farming Member families operating 94 irrigation farms and 56 properties which receive stock and domestic water only. District farmers conduct a variety of agricultural enterprises and while mixed farming dominates most of the area, grapes and olives are also grown. Beef feedlots and piggeries also operate within the District.

MPID holds Group Licences for 38,089 megalitres of General Security, 1151 megalitres of Stock & Domestic and 521 megalitres of Supplementary Water. The District also has a 0 megalitres High Security water licence. MPID does not have a Conveyancing Licence so each member contributes a share of entitlement to provide conveyancing water, enabling the District to operate for the benefit of all. Even in drought and zero allocations, the District has managed to ensure every member received deliveries of stock and domestic water, and that irrigation water was delivered to those members who had carry-over or purchased water.

In addition to its allocation, the District also delivers a large volume of additional water purchased by members on the water market (5745 megalitres in season 2005/2006)

The licences are, and always have been held on behalf of members by the Moira Board of Management, a group of members, elected by their peers to ensure the smooth running of the operation and to protect its viability. No individual member has ever held a water licence, but has a share of the Group Licence through an entitlement allocated to his/her property.

Entitlements were allocated under a formula determined when the District was established, with some changes resulting from sub-division of land and water, as well as permanent water sales and transfers within the District. Water share among members ranges from 50 to 999 Megalitres.

Members of the Moira Private Irrigation District Community are proud of their District and what it has achieved. The District has never had one cent of borrowed capital, nor has it received one cent of government contribution. And despite a decade of drought, zero allocations and very tough times for farming families, no member of this unique community has ever defaulted on paying his/her dues