

Submission No:	546
Date Received:	24-1-11
Secretary:	SC

Dear Inquiry members,

I would like to make a private submission to the inquiry.

Personal Background:

Though born in Sydney my family has a farming background and I have spent the majority of my life in regional NSW. I am a tertiary qualified IT professional who is currently working as an executive at one of Australia's major wine companies. Though the impacts on my personal livelihood is probably limited, the impacts of the proposed MDBA plan on our communities could be quite profound. For example, we already find it difficult to recruit professional staff into regional NSW, and a further weakening of the communities may force us to consider relocating our head-office functions thus accelerating the demise (a classic feedback loop scenario).

The following points cover some of my concerns with the MDBA plan:

Issue #1- Regarding the River Murray Barrages (also known as the Goolwa Barrages or Lake Alexandrina Barrages) constructed from 1935 to 1940.

Issue:

The Murrumbidgee Valley will potentially be decimated just to cover the evaporation in the lower lakes system - an originally estuarine system that has been converted into a dam via the Goolwa Barrages (causing poor environmental outcomes according to the MDBC's 2000 report:

"River Murray Barrages Environmental

Flow"http://publication.mdbc.gov.au/download/river_murray_barrages_environmental_flows_an_evaluation.pdf)

Ref:

p14 of MDBA's Supplementary document "Assessing environmental water requirements - Chapter 11 The Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth"(<http://download.mdba.gov.au/11-CLLMM.pdf>) ->

"Average evaporation at typical lake levels is about 800 GL/y. Therefore, taking into account this evaporation loss within the lower lakes, a minimum ten-year rolling average barrage flows of about 3,200 GL/y is required."

Background:

* The barrages converted a naturally estuarine system into a freshwater dam (.75m above sea level) "... to stabilise the river level, for both upstream irrigation and pumping."

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goolwa_Barrages

* In 1985, the Coorong and Lower Lakes Ramsar area were declared a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention.

http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/biodiversity/pdfs/wetlands/coorong/ramsar_management_plan.pdf

* In 2000, the MDBC issues a report highlighting the significant environmental impacts of the Goolwa Barrages, including a recommendation to "evaluate options for relocation and revised management of the barrages to enlarge estuarine area to increase the range of habitats"

http://publication.mdbc.gov.au/download/river_murray_barrages_environmental_flows_an_evaluation.pdf

* In 2007, the MDBA Act

http://www.mdba.gov.au/basin_plan/the-basin-plan-and-the-water-act

Section 100 - Nor abridge right to use water

The Commonwealth shall not, by any law or regulation of trade or commerce, abridge the right of a State or

of the residents therein to the reasonable use of the waters of rivers for conservation or irrigation.
<http://australianpolitics.com/constitution/text/chapter-4-finance-and-trade>

Issue 2:

Much of the modelling work presented by the MDBA appears to be based on European and American models, which are potentially not applicable in the highly variable Australian climatic conditions.

Issue 3:

Lack of storages (especially Dams), and the lack of courage and vision to propose or support increased storages.

Rationale:

Much of the MBDA plan appears predicated on climate change, yet much of the modelling appears to point to increased climate variability as the main potential risk (<http://www.csiro.au/science/climate-and-drought-in-eastern-Australia.html>).

Given this, it would appear a reasonable proposition to enhance storage capabilities to help smooth the ebbs and flows in variable rainfall patterns.

Summary

The MDBA has explained ad nauseam that the socially destructive plans being put forward are due to the constraints being imposed by the Water Actt 2007. Unfortunately, supporting unconscionable acts (pun intended) on communities feels much like the "Nuremberg Defence" - its not our fault ... we were only following orders.

Regards
Bill Robertson
Leeton