

# POINT STURT AND DISTRICTS LANDCARE GROUP INC.

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Mr Tony Windsor M.P  
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23-01-11

**Submission Number: 549**  
**Date Received: 27/01/11**

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Dear Mr Windsor,

## **The social costs of drought and overallocation of the Murray Darling River System.**

Point Sturt is a long, narrow peninsula of land jutting about 15 kilometers into Lake Alexandrina. Because of its position, Point Sturt and Districts Landcare Group's members have been ideally positioned to see the deterioration of this beautiful, internationally renowned Ramsar, Chamba, Koramba and Jamba wetland. They have seen the mouth closed, costly taxpayer funded dredges commissioned, and blocking banks built, birds disappearing, turtles dying, and retreating water leaving behind acidifying sand. They have also been aware that during these years water extractions have vastly increased.

As a generalisation, it would be fair to say that most of the people living in this area have been affected in some negative way economically during the recent drought. Some of these costs have been more medical expenses, and loss of choice in the local general store. It is not possible for us to divide the percentage of increased costs between the drought, and overallocation of the Murray Darling River system.

This letter aims to highlight some of the social wellbeing costs (psychological, cultural and spiritual costs) of the recently extremely reduced flows to this area, which led to an unhealthy water resource and human environment.

### **The costs to social wellbeing have been increases in**

- **Worry, stress and depression** because of extra work and economic costs such as loss of income, fewer production sales, higher costs of water, alteration of, and provision of new infrastructure, deteriorating land values and longer periods of time for real estate to sell.
- **Deterioration in the pleasure of family life, and increase in accidents** because of increased disharmony and arguments, increased violence, and increases in crime and suicide.
- **Negative effects on children's mental states**, and the negative effect this has on their ability to learn.

- **Business and land neglected**, because of the immense amount of time spent on government meetings to highlight the problems facing the district, and to protest against what appeared to be costly, ill conceived, knee jerk reactions to the drought.
- **Deterioration of, and lack of consideration of (by government planners) preserving the natural beauty, and functioning of the local ecosystems.** This has led to anger, community division, loss of recreational facilities, and loss of aesthetic/spiritual beauty, so necessary for the human soul and the replenishment of human well being.  
We spend vast sums of money purchasing artworks and travelling to exotic places, yet continue with schemes which trash our own local beauty spots.
- **Increase in pain, depression and anger** as we see, and try to help, struggling wildlife (turtles) survive when affected with salinity increased tubeworm.
- **Increase in resentment** at being at the deteriorating end of a system which is managed so that whilst some gain, others are the losers. In a system where the gainers have no conception of, or interest in, the pain their actions are causing others. In a system which rewards those who gain at the downstream loser's expense and then blames the losers for their loss.

All these negative feelings are some of the social wellbeing costs caused by a system in need of review and action. A system which needs to be returned to a healthy resilient ecosystem able to support the Australian people spiritually through its beauty, and economically through the water it shares for production.

Yours sincerely

Anne Hartnett  
Chair, Point Sturt and Districts Landcare Group.

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