

Submission No:	565
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Secretary:	SC

The Committee Secretary.
 Standing Committee on Regional Australia
 PO BOX 6021
 Parliament House
 CANBERRA ACT 2600

My submission;

I am 82 years of age, Retired, Full Time carer for my wife.

1. The last 60 years, actively associated with the Darling River, Bourke area.

"Gunderbooka" 1950. Swam flood, stranded sheep off island created by the 1950 flood.
 The Darling River was then a crystal clear slow flowing majestic stream.

"Redbank" 1955 – 6. Dived to retrieve a vehicle 26ft of water (main stream). Again, crystal clear, slow flowing water. It was at great comfort to know that after each dive, attempting and then successfully to attach a rope to this vehicle, I could look up over 20ft down and see the shadow of the diving boat and aim for it, exhausted as I usually was. This is impossible today.

During my years at Gunderbooka and Redbank, I had many discussions with ex-fisherman who fished for a living.

The Barwon-Darling. Mainly Walgett to Tilpa. During the 30's pre world war II years and pre construction of the Bourke Weir, their stories of the rivers then was very educational.

No fisherman ever to me associated sporning with the Darling River.

It was always when there was a fresh in the Culgoa. Breeders left their water holes and flocked to the Culgoa, where they sporned. At the first sign of the fresh finishing (Culgoa falling). The breeders stampeded back to their water holes in the Darling.

Nursery yes, and a form of order yes, never sporning.

As an earth mover (tank sinker) I have been able to look back many thousands of years of our land transformation. Particularly in the Yantabulla area, and around Gunderbooka Mountain.

I have witnessed in my life time the transformation from grass land (Pioneer Assessment) "Grass up to the stirrup irons" A lot of this country now has a woody weed – timber problem.

Also observed many native trees ability to harvest, moisture and store, plus shut down.

"Landillo"

During ownership of Landillo, the Darling River was a daily part of our lives. Originally we had an A class licence which we had to forfeit to obtain a B class licence. Many conditions applied to this licence. Many license conditions have changed since. The conditions effect and substance of these changes should be documented and available for scrutiny.

I was for many years a Bourke Shire Counsellor. I was for many years a Delegate to the Murganda Mine side Advisory Association.

I was for many years secretary of the Bourke Water Users Association and other local Associations.

Influences which have impacted on our Darling River.

Fertilizer residue from Arial Applications. Broad acre application.

Establishment of many sewerage treatment works adjacent to rivers and possible leaching.

The carp infestation after in 1976 flood.

Change in land use, in catchment resulting in faster run off and flows, also more silt.

Silt trap weirs. Restricting ability to flush and fish migration. The Bourke Weir pool has lost considerable capacity due to silting.

I visually witnessed the river bank slumping opposite our Landillo pump site and do not support the fast dropping of the river level (water) as the cause of the slumping. There is much evidence which has not been considered as contributing.

Again the blue green algie event needs closer scrutiny.

There is a need for a broader deputation type forums. Where questions may be asked, information assessed and hopefully mistakes not repeated.

Jack Bennett