



TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

INQUIRY INTO THE IMPACT OF THE MURRAY-DARLING BASIN PLAN IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA
PUBLIC HEARING AT SHEPPARTON ON 21ST JANUARY 2011

SUBMISSION FROM:

JAN BEER

The Murray–Darling Basin Authority's principal aim is to manage the Basin's water resources in the national interest

I fail to see how this aim is being fulfilled when the Federal Govt is allowed to continue on its merry way buying back water, which is in effect destroying irrigation areas, by reducing the critical mass or volume of water available in irrigation districts necessary for those systems to run in a viable and economic manner

Federal Govt has thrown a billion dollars at foodbowl modernisation while at the same time removing through its buyback scheme the ability of those irrigation systems to function.

The Federal Government should immediately cease the water Buy-back Scheme until such time as it can clearly understand the social and economic implications this is having on people and communities in the Basin, and the drastic effect of the scheme on the very viability of the irrigation systems once there is an enormous reduction in the volume of water available.

This volume has already reduced from approximately 1600GL per annum to currently 1300GL/PA and Goulburn Murray Water forecasts that within 4 years this will be down to 800GL per annum available to the irrigation system.

I am also concerned that the MDB Plan has concentrated on providing further water to the environment based on the continuation of dry years, such as we have experienced from 1997 to 2009, whilst completely ignoring the implications its proposed basin guide may have in wet cycles.

What is the planning to protect the environment and its people if we now enter a wet cycle and further major flooding is experienced?

We have already seen, since the breaking of the drought, catastrophic flooding in the MDB, from Queensland to Victoria.

The economic and social repercussions of this flooding will be felt by landowners and state and federal government for a considerable time.

Once we have water storages with a large percentage of environmental water stored that is not required during wet cycles, less demand from irrigation systems for food production because

irrigators have been forced out, we then have dams such as Eildon Weir with far less air space than in the past, and the perfect scenario for major flood events.

The years below are some of the years when Eildon Weir reached 100% capacity. These were also years when there was major flooding downstream. Please note the capacity level of the weir in the early part of these years.

1956- THE YEAR AFTER IT WAS COMPLETED, Eildon Weir was 71.7% full BY APRIL

1993- 82.3% full BY MAY

1996- 48.9% full BY APRIL

2011- 80% full BY JANUARY 31st

The years show that the amount currently held in Lake Eildon is the highest since Jan 1997 when they started filming *The Castle*. Also it is pretty much unheard of for the storage in Eildon to be rising in January through to February, as it is doing this year.

So, the major storage reservoir on the Goulburn River is nearly 80% full in the middle of summer. We have not even entered the filling season. All billabongs, lagoons, storage areas on the Goulburn system are full to overflowing.

If the pattern continues in following seasons of wetter years, decreased usage of irrigation water, increased storage of environmental water, we have the perfect scenario for major flooding in the Goulburn- Broken system

I am a farmer on the Yea River floodplains in the Upper Catchment of the Goulburn River. I believe the Murray Darling Basin Plan and Federal BuyBack Scheme may have the potential implication of increasing major flooding when we have very wet seasons.

WHAT PERCENTAGE OF THE 3000-4000GL OF WATER THE FEDERAL GOVT IS BUYING BACK WILL BE KEPT IN EILDON WEIR?

This environmental water will be in addition to that stored for the Living Murray Program and the Water for Rivers Program.

Other water stored in Eildon Weir for environmental purposes is the 30GL Environmental Reserve.

Normally 60% of water from Eildon Weir is used for irrigation purposes, but this annual use is decreasing and the weir is increasingly becoming a storage for environmental water and storage for urban water, particularly if the North-South Pipeline ever came into use again.

If the pattern continues in following seasons of wetter years, decreased usage of irrigation water, increased storage of environmental and urban water, what is the MDB Plan to prevent or control flooding.

I CAN SEE A POTENTIALLY A DISASTROUS FLOOD SCENARIO ARISING OUT OF THE MDB PLAN, NOT JUST FOR THOSE PEOPLE DOWNSTREAM ALONG THE GOULBURN AND ITS IRRIGATION

AREAS, BUT ALSO IN THE UPPER GOULBURN CATCHMENT, WHICH SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN IGNORED AS FAR AS CONSEQUENCES OF THE MDB PLAN

THE YEA RIVER'S CONFLUENCE WITH THE GOULBURN RIVER IS JUST DOWNSTREAM OF YEA. WHEN THE GOULBURN IS IN FLOOD OR RUNNING A BANKER THE FLOODWATERS FROM THE YEA RIVER JUST CANNOT GET AWAY, AND LIKE THE PEOPLE IN THE NORTH ARE NOW EXPERIENCING I AM LEFT WITH STINKING ROTTING PASTURE AND PADDOCKS FULL OF WEEDS—AND LAGOONS AND BILLABONGS FULL OF CARP WHICH SIT THERE AND GROW TO ENORMOUS SIZES UNTIL WE GET THE NEXT DRY CYCLE WHEN THE LAGOONS DRY OUT.

ALL TRIBUTARIES TO THE GOULBURN RIVER IN THE UPPER CATCHMENT EXPERIENCE A SIMILAR SITUATION.

WE NOW HAVE EILDON WEIR 80% FULL, NO IRRIGATION WATER BEING CURRENTLY RELEASED, AN UNKNOWN QUANTITY OF FEDERAL BUY-BACK WATER TO BE STORED AND IRRIGATION SYSTEMS BEING DOWN-SIZED OR DISAPPEARING IN MANY AREAS AND A FORECAST ABOVE AVERAGE WET YEAR.

THE FLOODING POTENTIAL IS ENORMOUS AND GROWING WITH EVERY MEGALITRE THAT THE FEDERAL GOVT CONTINUES TO BUY AND WITH EVERY IRRIGATION PROPERTY THAT IS FORCED OUT OF EXISTENCE

WE HAVE 8 KM OF FRONTAGE TO THE YEA RIVER. WE HAVE JUST HAD OUR 6TH FLOOD FOR THE YEAR, WITH THE LAST ONE ON 14TH JANUARY THIS YEAR. PRIOR TO 1996 IT WAS NOT UNCOMMON TO GET ANYWHERE BETWEEN 2-5 FLOODS PER YEAR, AND WE CAN AND HAVE HAD FLOODS IN ANY MONTH OF THE YEAR, INCLUDING ONE IN FEBRUARY 2005

THE FLOODS THIS SEASON HAVE BROUGHT ENORMOUS DAMAGE TO FENCES AND RIVER BANK EROSION HAS BEEN IMMENSE.

WITH LEVEE BANKS WASHED AWAY, MASSIVE RED GUM TREES HUNDREDS OF YEARS OLD RIPPED OUT, LEAVING GAPING HOLES IN RIVER BANKS RIPE FOR FURTHER EROSION. THAT SOIL HAS GONE FOREVER FROM MY PROPERTY, UNABLE TO EVER BE REPLACED.

THE FEDERAL GOVT MUST IMMEDIATELY CEASE THE FEDERAL BUYBACK SCHEME, UNTIL THE IMPLICATIONS IN BOTH WET AND DRY CYCLES ARE INVESTIGATED THOROUGHLY WITH INPUT OF LOCAL FARMER KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE.

THE MDB AUTHORITY HAS COMPLETELY IGNORED THE POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES ITS PLAN MAY HAVE DURING WET CYCLES. AND IN MANY WAYS MAJOR FLOODING IS MORE DAMAGING THAN DROUGHT.

End of Submissison.

Promotes and coordinates planning and management for the sustainable use of the land, water and environmental resources of the MDB

We are responsible to the Australian Government's Minister of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities.

What does the Murray–Darling Basin Authority do?

MDBA's principal aim is to manage the Basin's water resources in the national interest.

Our roles include:

- preparing the Basin Plan for adoption by the Commonwealth Water Minister
- implementing and enforcing the Basin Plan
- advising the Commonwealth Water Minister on the accreditation of state water resource plans
- measuring and monitoring water resources in the Basin
- gathering information and undertaking research
- educating and engaging the community in the management of the Basin's resources.

In addition to preparing the Basin Plan, the Authority manages the water resources of the Murray–Darling Basin, in conjunction with the Basin states through a number of programs, such as:

- The [Native Fish Strategy](#) to restore native fish populations in the Basin back to 60 per cent of their estimated pre-European settlement levels within 50 years.
- The [Living Murray](#) program to achieve a healthy working River Murray system for the benefit of all Australians.
- The [Sustainable Rivers Audit](#) to monitor the long-term health of the Basin's rivers.
- The [River Murray Water Quality Monitoring](#) program to report and assesses water quality, variability and trends to guide management actions along the River Murray and the lower reaches of its tributaries and storages.
- The [River Murray Operations](#) to direct water releases from storages and control the diversions of water from the river for irrigation and agricultural use, and for consumers in urban areas.
- The [Basin Salinity Management Strategy](#) to minimise the impacts of salinity in the Basin.
- The [Water Trade Program](#) to co-ordinate and refine the rules for trading water interstate.

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