

APPENDIX A TO RAMROC'S SUBMISSION TO MDBA REGARDING THE PROPOSED BASIN PLAN

RAMROC COUNCILS MEETING WITH MURRAY DARLING BASIN AUTHORITY – AT HAY ON WEDNESDAY 4TH APRIL 2012 - THE LIST OF 26 KEY QUESTIONS SUBMITTED IN ADVANCE FOR TO MDBA FOR RESPONSE AT THE MEETING

Category 1 – Environmental Watering Requirements and Delivery Capacities

1. At the very start of the Basin plan process, MDBA was adamant that an EWP was the initial essential process to be undertaken. Why has there been no comprehensive Environmental Watering Plan developed by MDBA as the essential foundation for determining the Sustainable Diversion Limits.?
2. The draft MDB Plan only includes an overarching EWP framework document for later preparation of detailed EWPs by the respective States Why couldn't the detailed EWPs be undertaken as part of the draft Basin Plan ?
3. In the absence of a comprehensive EWP, what are the bases and justifications for the determination of the proposed Sustainable Diversion Limits and how can communities be expected to have any confidence in the process that has taken place ?
4. We understand that modelling and environmental needs reports prepared by MDBA have still not been made available to the States to justify the SDLs. Why is this the case
5. Taking into account the environmental water acquisitions pre 2009 and the 2,750 GL now being the required additional target, some 3,573 GL will be available annually for environmental watering. Pending the development of detailed EWPs by the States in the future, where is the current plan as to how, where and when these specific quantities of water (in addition to other natural flows) will be delivered in the short term ?
6. Will MDBA explain the fundamental scientific basis that underpins the draft Plan, taking into account:
 - The myth of a pristine environment (it was man made before European settlement)
 - The preservation of some artificial areas such as south east Coorong;
 - What date MDBA is
 - using as a reference point as to what is natural and what is man influenced
7. How does MDBA intend to transport its water down the Murray without third party impacts and significant impacts on tourism businesses ?
8. How is it that third party impacts can be confined to above Yarrawonga ?
9. What scientific work has been done to assess whether or not the environmental water already held may in practice be sufficient to meet environmental needs ?

Category 2 – Social and Economic Impacts

1. Why hasn't the comprehensive detailed social and economic modelling for all affected individual communities been released and when will that information be publicly available.?
2. What were the conclusions and recommendation of the social and economic modelling carried out for individual communities in the RAMROC region, for example the Deniliquin area and the Griffith area ? How have these individual results been factored into the draft Plan proposals ?
3. If the environmental outcomes are undefined, how does MDBA justify the acquisition of a further 2,750 GL of water that would otherwise be used for food production and maintaining the economic and social fabric of our rural communities ?
4. Why has there been no cost benefit analysis which would compare the environmental watering outcomes as well as the agricultural production impacts and community impacts ?
5. What Commonwealth Government investments are proposed to offset the social and economic impacts on our communities ?

Category 3 – Sustainable Diversion Limits

1. What consideration has been given by MDBA to the dramatic change of weather patterns since the millennium drought broke in 2010 and how has this impacted on the setting of the proposed Sustainable Diversion Limits and the timetable for the proposed further recovery of 2,750 GL ?
2. What recent work has been done or is underway by MDBA to re-assess the current health of the river systems and the existing condition of the identified key environmental assets and to match these current conditions to the environmental watering needs leading up to 2019 ?
3. What consideration, if any, has been given by MDBA in setting the proposed SDL of 10,873 GL to the adverse impacts on Australia's food production capacities and responsibilities, global food security and the associated human environmental issues of rapidly growing world population, hunger and civil unrest and so on?.
4. What is the situation regarding the 971 GL yet to be acquired from the Southern Basin for "downstream water recovery" needs and when will this be apportioned amongst the applicable catchments, bearing in mind the increased uncertainty for Murray and Murrumbidgee catchment communities in particular?

Category 4 - Infrastructure

1. Why is the Federal Government and MDBA adopting an insular MD Basin only approach and is giving no consideration whatsoever to the need for Australia to develop a long term National Water Policy and Plan, including nation building water infrastructure projects such as new or enlarged storages, river diversion schemes, improved river systems management and other innovative solutions to better harness, deliver and manage the nation's water resources.?
2. What consideration is given in the draft Plan to the evaporation issues of the Lower Lakes/Coorong and Murray Mouth and the potential to implement infrastructure and management strategies that will mitigate those losses of some 900 GL annually and in doing so potentially minimise the acquisition target
3. How much of the \$4.8 billion provided for the Murray Darling Basin activities (as part of the \$5.8 billion Australia wide funding) is actually available for infrastructure works. How much of that money is being diverted to fund other SEWPaC programs ?
4. When will the \$708 million funding for New South Wales State Priority Project Funding be made available to enable those water savings projects to proceed ?

Category 5 – Water Entitlements Acquisitions – Buyback program and other issues

1. Why won't the Federal Government and MDBA commit to no further water purchases until MDBA can demonstrate achievement of goals in the Environmental Watering Plan ?
2. Why won't MDBA recommend that water purchased be able to have temporary trading when not needed for environmental uses ?
3. Why can't further water acquisitions be deferred, pending the assessment of proposals in response to the Discussion Paper issued by the Commonwealth Water Holder, which will likely put forward a range of options or outcomes which may well empower and fund the CWH to purchase or lease temporary water allocations, in order to make up for any shortfalls in annual delivery of environmental water, and thus potentially eliminating the need to purchase further permanent water entitlements at this stage ?
4. With the Commonwealth Water Holder now in possession of so much environmental water, there is concern that CWH accumulated environmental water may displace carryover in the dams, or it may provide a potential opportunity for the carryover rules to be manipulated to bring about a de-facto displacement of water allocations. This relates directly to the issue of community trust, so would MDBA provide clarification and certainty around this particular issue in order to resolve these community concerns.