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**Murrumbidgee Private Irrigators Incorporated
(MPII)**

in conjunction with the

**Yanco Creek and Tributaries Advisory Council
(YACTAC)**

Submission to the

**House of Representative Standing Committee on
Regional Australia**

**Inquiry into certain matters relating to the proposed
Murray-Darling Basin Plan**

Due by 15 June 2012

Submit via

Introduction:

MPII represents irrigators on the full length of the Murrumbidgee River, and Yanco Creek System. Our members live from Batlow to Balranald and from Jerilderie to Moulamein. We also have a number of “operators” amongst our members although volumes of water are vastly smaller than the irrigation corporations. We are approximately one third of the diversions on the Murrumbidgee system with approximately 400,000 megalitres being made up of High Security and General Security entitlements dispersed amongst approximately 400 members.

MPII find it necessary to note once again the lack of an equal playing field due to the time given to submit this submission and express that whilst the Draft Basin Plan is presented differently to the Guide, the potential outcome of the Draft is frighteningly similar.

MPII have had the opportunity to engage and consult with the MDBA, however the historical local knowledge and views of our members appears to have fallen on deaf ears.

As a result of this outcome community angst is still alive and strong simply because The Plan doesn't demonstrate any innovative methods of finding a triple bottom line. MPII are of the view that there would be a multitude of other solutions similar to the Nimmie Caira project that could deliver outcomes for the environment without the volumes of water outlined in The Plan.

With the above key points in mind please see below potential projects which require vigorous investigation prior to further permanent water entitlement buyback.

CARM (Computer-Aided River Management)

State Water has been working with Water for Rivers funding in the Murrumbidgee River System replacing our current river management operation with state of the art technology which we understand may significantly improve and automate a number of river operation functions.

CARM is a program of works that upgrades all river operations monitoring and control technologies to industry best practice.

Whilst the early phase of CARM is exciting and appears to be a positive initiative that will produce valuable savings for the environment, the project requires time to prove the factual volume of savings that State Water and WfR is anticipating and the savings should be included in the Basin Plan.

Nimmie Caira

The Nimmie Caira project offers a unique opportunity to package significant water recovery with land and biodiversity reclamation, as well as greater

flexibility to achieve Murray/Murrumbidgee harmonisation for the benefit of lower Murray targets.

The purchase of the properties in the Nimmie Caira portion of Lowbidgee has the potential to convert 170GL of existing 'consumptive' water use to 'environmental' water use, including a change in land management practices in Nimmie Caira, bringing significant biodiversity improvements. The project also has the potential to significantly enhance the ability of the Murrumbidgee environmental flows to contribute to the watering of Basin Plan wetland assets on the Murray floodplain downstream of Euston. Flows at Balranald are constrained by channel capacity of about 9GL/d, but the active management of floodway flows through Lowbidgee allows flows at Balranald of up to 30GL/d. This increase in regulated river delivery capacity significantly offsets the need for SDL reductions to achieve watering of these floodplains, although in the absence of agreed, specific lower Murray floodplain targets it is difficult to quantify potential SDL offsets.

Menindee

There is considerable controversy over potential savings that could be realised from works and measures at Menindee. Surely common sense tells us that major investigations should continue to occur surrounding savings at Menindee prior to the Commonwealth taking the easy solution for them which is direct buyback from food and fibre producers.

Changed operations of Snowy Hydro Limited (SHL)

Consideration of changing SHL operations should be given some merit as an SDL offset could possibly be achieved if SHL storages could be used to better schedule delivery of water to Basin Plan environmental targets.

Large volumes of water from SHL enter Hume and Blowering storages when these storages are pre-releasing or spilling. This water doesn't benefit irrigation water security (because it spills) and subsequently goes to the environment, but not necessarily at the best time or location. This proposal is to use the SHL storages to re-schedule releases to deliver water directly to Basin Plan Environmental targets. Sometimes it may be environmentally beneficial to deliver water to Hume and Blowering when they are spilling. This proposal would not exclude this, but rather gives the Environmental holder the discretion to determine the time of release and delivery.

The volume of SHL water that is 'spilled' to the environment on average is in the order of 25% of total SHL releases, ie about 500GL. Further analysis is required to determine what proportion of this water can be viably redirected to SDL offsets.

Water Sharing Plan - rules based water

A number of Water Sharing Plans have significant volumes of 'rules based environmental water'. As a result of the potential changes to end of system flows etc, which will be borne from efficiency projects and savings, WSP's should be revisited and potentially adjusted to accommodate the changed behaviour.

The End.