Submission No: 511
Date Received: 17/12/10
Secretary: SC

SUBMISSION TO – GUIDE TO THE PROPOSED BASIN PLAN

Conargo Council is a large rural shire situated in the Riverina of NSW and covering an area of approximately 8,500 square kilometers with a population of 1,740. There is a number of small villages including Conargo, Booroorban, Wanganella, Pretty Pine, Blighty and Mayrung.

The neighbouring Local Government areas are:

Murray Shire	Berrigan Shire
Wakool Shire	Murrumbidgee Shire
Hay Shire	Deniliquin Council
Jerilderie Shire	

Conargo Shire has several large holdings which are renowned for their stud sheep, more particularly the Peppin Merino Bloodline developed by the Peppin Family in the 1860's.

The area has various forms of irrigation and with the rich fertile soil allows for a huge range of agricultural pursuits, including:

Stud Sheep	Stud Cattle
Wool	Cereal Crops (wheat & rice main variety)
Fat Lambs	Dairying
Olive Groves	Viticulture
Agro-Forestry	

Statistics show that in 2005/06 rice production in Conargo Shire was $38.2 million and amounted to 14% of total value of rice production in Australia.

Due to the concern the Council and Ratepayers have to the guidelines to the Proposed Basin Plan this Council submits the following for consideration:

- Council has been actively involved with a number of other organsiations in the area opposing the guidelines to the Proposed Basin Plan and fully supports their submissions. These organisations include:

  - Murray Darling Association
  - Murray Group of Concerned Citizens
  - RAMROC
  - Murray Irrigation Ltd

  Council also attended a meeting in Canberra on the 22nd November, 2010 where the "Declaration of Concern" was unanimously adopted.
  This Council fully supports this declaration.

- Council believes the guide is extremely weighted towards the environment and request equal weighting to environmental, economic and social.

Council fully supports the on-going maintenance of the environment but the social and economic impact on our communities is as important if not more important than the environment.

- The area has experienced approximately a 17% loss in water entitlements and any further significant losses will result in a further reduction of our population which will have a major effect on the following:

    - Volunteer Fire Fighting Personnel
    - Schools remaining open
    - Utilisation of our sporting and Recreation Facilities

  Council considers the 800 job losses and $800m in lost production, stated in the Plan, is grossly understated.

- A reduction in water allocations will have a significant impact on businesses in the area.
  The above can be demonstrated with the closure of the Deniliquin Rice Mill in 2007 due to the very low water allocation and minimal rice being grown.
  Due to substantial water allocations in 2010/11 the Mill is expected to re-open early 2011. If there is significant reductions in water allocations these businesses may close and never open again. If this happens there will be significant social and economic ramifications in our region.

- Council supports the Government infrastructure efficiency works, both on farm and off farm, under the $5.8 billion allocation provided for in the water for the future program. This project will improve water efficiency now and into the future.

- If the $3.1 billion water buyback is to continue the Council would prefer that the buyback is co-ordinated and the "swiss cheese" approach does not happen.
  If a co-ordinated approach to buyback is not implemented it could result in additional cost to irrigators who are left in the industry.

- A reduction in allocations or a delay in finalising the Draft Plan can have a significant impact on the mental health of our communities. Accordingly Council request that there be minimal impact on water reduction and all matters be finalised as early as possible.

- A reduction in water allocation will have a significant impact on food production and will not only affect people within the irrigation areas but all Australians. This will also effect our export production and make Australia reliant on importing food.

- The guidelines to the Proposed Plan do not include an environmental water plan and it is imperative that our communities are able to review the method and criteria that environmental water is purchased and used.

- Sustainable diversion limits, if reduced, should be implemented at the same time for all states.
  From the guidelines to the Proposed Basin Plan it appears the sustainable diversion limits will be delayed in Victoria. Irrigators in our area will be disadvantaged due to the close proximity to Victoria.

As stated above and from comments in other submissions this Council is very concerned with the guidelines to the Draft Plan and request that a review take place that adequately covers social and economic issues and these be advised to the community to allow further consultation and hopefully a win win situation.

ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO:
GENERAL MANAGER,
P.O. BOX 56,
DENILIQUIN, N.S.W. 2710

COUNCIL CHAMBERS,
122 END STREET,
DENILIQUIN, N.S.W. 2710
TELEPHONE: (03) 5880 1200
FAX: (03) 5881 2568
EMAIL: info@conargo.nsw.gov.au

24th November 2010

Murray Darling Basin Authority
PO Box 3001
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Sir

Re: Submission – Guide to the Proposed Basin Plan

Attached is Conargo Shire Council's submission to the Guide to the Proposed Basin Plan.

If you require further information please contact the undersigned on (03) 5880 1200.

Yours faithfully

Barry W Barlow
General Manager