

TO:
Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committees
Parliament House Canberra

I wish to make a submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Provisions of the Water Act 2007.

It is my opinion that there is no need to amend the Water Act 2007.

In the second half of the twentieth century, grave errors were made regarding water extraction rates in the Murray-Darling River system. The Water Act 2007 goes a long way towards rectifying the disastrous results of bad decision-making.

There was always a danger of a backlash from commercial interests when a wholistic plan for the basin was presented to the public.

Those interests are indeed threatened if we attempt to return to a healthy balance in the basin between environmental and agricultural needs. However these commercial interests do not support the greater good and it is the Government's responsibility to make decisions which support the greater good.

It's no longer possible to ignore the interconnection between healthy ecosystems and human health.

I am a full-time farmer who understands the importance of a secure water supply. I try to farm within the confines of the natural resources available to us in the environment we inhabit. I attended the MDB consultation in Canberra and thought the presentation was informative and convincing.

It is possible to adapt to lower water use. In fact almost all farmers in eastern Australia, those of us who have survived the terrible drought of the past decade, have had to do just that, not just irrigators.

I would like to see more funding to help irrigators adapt and diversify into other types of dryland farming on their land. There are many alternative models to follow. This would be better than seeing farmers leaving their land, and would help to maintain the health of communities in the basin.

Many farming communities in the basin moved into irrigation from grazing in order to have greater certainty and higher profits. It's hard to blame them for that, but the change to cropping has led to over-clearing of woodlands and a huge loss of biodiversity. When the rivers dried up it was impossible to ignore the fact that bad decisions had been made. To support those unsustainable industries to continue as usual would be to ignore the lessons we have recently learned.

The Act as it is written has mostly got the balance right. In the future we need to adapt to the conditions rather than trying to shape our environment to suit our needs or wants.

I hope our leaders will stand up for our dedicated scientists whose work has given us a good plan for the future.

Yours sincerely

Judith Turley