

Submission to the Senate

MDBWS

Dear Sirs, Madams,

With respect, we are originally from Sydney and moved to Leeton with the great promise of a better lifestyle.

Indeed we were truly amazed at the difference it made to our “rebel teenagers”. I am sure we can all appreciate THAT!!!

We set out to purchase a property that would run a horse or two and instead ended up developing a vineyard. We were so poor that we couldn't afford laser leveling and instead used string, rope and 10,000 plastic knives (which will curl, no doubt, many an environmentalist) but raised ourselves out of bed at 5am each and every day until it was done. My husband went to many courses run by Murrumbidgee Irrigation and our local council – he also met and talked to many farmers – who helped, one way or another, once they saw we were “fair dinkum” and worked as hard as we could – (I also had two children under three at the time).

My husband listened to the farmers and became water wise. We wanted to become future proofed and ensure a future for our beautiful children.

We first built a dam and then filled that in and put in drip irrigation on the advice of fellow farmers – we put in drip irrigation into our domestic gardens and put time limits on showers, recycle water and taught our children to NEVER throw a glass of water “down the drain” instead into the kettle or pot for future boiling for cooking etc.

We invested our lives, hopes and our children's' future into this property. We have battled through years of drought and unpredictable grape prices. We also have planted nearly one hundred trees on our property, ranging from Olives to fruit and nut trees. Our garden is full to busting with native plants and we grow our own vegetables organically.

We are part of a community that is aware of the value of water and we are proud of our Wetlands. We conserve what we can, recycle and even run our own chickens, educate our children on our beloved land – we are proud that we supply food and (in our case) wonderful grapes for juice and wine, to Australia and other countries. We have worked hard and continue to work hard – not only for our family but for our community.

We are happy to show you the many ways that we in the MIA have become more water effective; indeed we have invested, individually heavily to achieve this goal. We are happy to listen and learn of any other ways we can become more so.

Why not invest in the water infrastructure – build more dams or better still pipe the water as has been suggested for many years as being a huge saver of our precious resource.

The plan put forward by the Group would effectively shut us down, the whole of our communities up and down the MDB – you would inevitably have to be prepared to look after us all and frankly you would never have a solution to put farmers, shop keepers into other work that would be as productive as we are today. In fact, not only would you have to spend money on unemployment, retraining, relocation and sadly mental health but also be prepared to import food with all the associated risks.

Food that you import would have to be investigated for genetic modification, pest and herbicide chemicals, radiation exposure and even exposure to contaminated water. This is a high risk which you cannot ignore. You would be exposing Australia to an even larger carbon foot print that currently the government is telling us is alarming and needs to be taxed and innovated. Well I can save you lots of time and money – leave us to grow our crops. We are happy to protect the environment – we also need to see proof that the government is serious in this course of action too!

Every day we stand and wonder at how hard our lives are but how lucky we are – we are productive and feed the nation. This is a job we do because we must. Let us continue to put food on your plates and fill your glass when you toast the bride.... We don't mind working hard – just know that we are conscience that this land is ours for our future generations and being caretakers we tread softly. Do you???

With regards and hope

Brigitte Bode