

Solutions: The Murray Darling Basin Plan

Principles:

1. The health of the Murray Darling Basin is important – both for people and environment.
2. Only integrated landscape scale action can result in genuine improvement in the Basin.
3. Environmental outcomes for the Murray Darling Basin must be achieved without negatively impacting on rural communities.

Issues:

Interpretation of the Water Act 2007	<p>A major flaw in The Guide stems from the interpretation of the Water Act 2007, in particular, Section 20 (d) the use and management of the Basin water resources in a way that optimises economic, social and environmental outcomes.</p> <p>The Guide presents sub-optimal social and economic outcomes, with primary emphasis on the environment at a cost to rural communities.</p>
Hydrology focus	<p>The Guide focuses on the hydrology of each basin as an indicator, as this is the attribute that is to be influenced by reducing consumptive allocations.</p> <p>Due to its single focus issue on hydrology, the potential environmental outcomes achieved will be limited. A more comprehensive approach addressing the fundamental catchment issues affecting water resource condition is required.</p>
The science - regional issues	<p>There are regionally specific issues unique to each river valley arising from the adoption of a "blanket" approach. Example issues arising for the Gwydir:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is the Gwydir system not considered as an inland terminal delta system? • How has the Integrated Quality Quantity Model (IQQM) accounted for pre-development conditions and the Gwydir terminal delta in modelling end of system flows? • The Sustainable Rivers Audit describes the environmental condition as poor but the hydrology as in good condition for the Gwydir River catchment. How is hydrology considered the limiting factor? • What is the intended use and interpretation of the end of system flows within the Gwydir?

Solutions:

Adopt a landscape scale approach	<p>Adopt a landscape scale approach to managing the health of the Basin – land and water, agriculture and environment. Singular focus on hydrology is not a solution to the health of the Basin.</p> <p>Strategic management or remedial measures should be applied on a valley specific basis, addressing the most limiting factors to catchment health.</p> <p>The power of education and extension should not be underestimated in this process – natural resource management is first and foremost a “people” business.</p>
Build on existing regional natural resource management plans	<p>Use existing Regional Plans as the platform for addressing the health of the Basin – and forge links with Regional Development Australia and Local Government.</p> <p>Natural resource management planning and investment in Australia is based on catchments and in NSW this is enshrined in The Catchment Management Authorities Act 2003.</p> <p>Catchment Action Plans have been developed for valleys in NSW -and QLD, SA and VIC have similar planning mechanisms in place.</p>
Invest in on-farm and water delivery infrastructure	<p>Greater investment in water use efficiencies of both bulk water delivery and on farm infrastructure can achieve water savings while stimulating local economies.</p>
Invest in Basin Communities	<p>Immediate action is required to restore the confidence of the business world in locations where future viability of communities within the basin has been eroded by “The Guide”.</p> <p>Greater investment in regional infrastructure and regional development will increase the resilience of communities to change and variability in the agricultural sector.</p>
Adapt to a variable climate	<p>Recognise that climate change scenarios mean significantly increased variability in rainfall and runoff. Environmental planning needs to embrace this fact. The agricultural industry will also need support to adapt to change.</p>

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