

Senate Legal and Constitutional Committees,

The Murray-Darling Basin Plan is the best, and perhaps the last, opportunity we have to restore the health to the precious river and wetland systems of the Basin, which support us all. Thus I am in support of the *Water Act 2007* as it stands because it balances well the needs of the environment and communities. Healthy rivers go hand in hand with healthy communities.

The *Water Act 2007* recognises the need to return extraction to long-term environmentally sustainable levels and this must remain the focus of the Act.

The *Water Act 2007* prioritises the need to reduce water extraction and return water to the environment in order to support both the ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.

The balance of water use in the Basin has been heavily weighted towards extraction for irrigation for too long, leading to highly stressed river systems. The *Water Act 2007* was introduced in order to address this imbalance and return water to the environment.

The *Water Act 2007* correctly acknowledges the need to base decisions about sustainable water extraction levels on the best available science. Any call to base decisions on a different 'balance' of social and environmental considerations will rely on politics and not scientific understanding.

The *Water Act 2007* gets the balance right and does not need to be amended. For the good of the Murray-Darling Basin, and its Plan, please leave the Water Act 2007 as it is.

Thank you,
Meg Stewart