

"The Guide" to the Murray Darling Basin Plan

Principles:

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

Key Issues for Discussion:

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>
Whole of Catchment Approach	<p>Promote a "whole of catchment" approach to managing the health of the Basin – land and water, agriculture and environment.</p> <p>An accurate assessment of environmental assets is required to ultimately determine the required environmental water to maintain those assets.</p> <p>Strategic remedial measures should be applied, not blanket solutions.</p>
Existing natural resource management plans	<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 (CAPs) have been developed for all 13 CMAs in NSW of which 8 are potentially effected by the Basin Plan</p> <p>CAPs allow integrated natural resource management planning and</p>



Border Rivers-Gwydir

CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

"Helping people in our communities look after their land for future generations."

subsequent investment

Despite major input and advice from CMAs to the MDBA, little or no regard has been had to the concepts of integrated natural resource planning and investment, or the relevance of the CAPs in NSW.

Investment in Basin
Communities

Advocate for greater investment in water use efficiencies of both bulk water delivery and on farm infrastructure

Advocate for greater investment in regional infrastructure

Take immediate action to restore the confidence of the business world in locations where future viability of communities within the basin has been eroded by "The Guide"

Reliance on water buybacks, without a properly structured approach to where that water is purchased from, will result in a fragmented irrigation industry. This will lead to a much greater social and economic impact than those considered by the plan as farmers are forced to exit due to the increased costs associated with an inefficient delivery system.

The Science - Regional
Issues

There are regionally specific issues unique to each river valley.

Example issues arising for the Gwydir:

- 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. Why is hydrology considered the limiting factor?
- What is the intended use and interpretation of the end of system flows within the Gwydir?