



KEVIN HUMPHRIES MP

NSW STATE MEMBER FOR BARWON

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Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Dear Committee Members,

It is hard not to be continually critical of the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) and their appalling approach in delivering the Guide to a Plan. If it was a guide to a road map you would find yourself and many of our communities quickly over the nearest cliff!

Having attended most of the NSW meetings, it was evident that the MDBA is taking a generic position on the Basin at the expense of local knowledge and historical developments in water management over the last decade.

Failing to appreciate the gains in shared management of water (via NSW Water Sharing Plans) which commenced ten years ago, has been further fuelled by:

- Ambiguity across all the valleys in flawed modelling (the IQQM model is to be replaced);
- Current sales of environmental water back to irrigators in a number of valleys;
- Previous knock back of water offerings to the Commonwealth because they did not meet identified environmental targets now reversed and;
- A failure to appreciate that many of our river valleys are in effect closed systems and contribute little to the overall basin system.

The fact of the matter is that the buyback target and ambit claim for the Basin has grown in my time from 500 GL/yr to now 3,000 - 7,600 GL/yr. This is an extraordinary leap with the only difference in the last decade scientifically, the reality of a rip roaring drought.

Any fool, even our Federal Ministers Tony Burke and Simon Crean, would appreciate that this Guide is only a snap shot in time, and any developments regarding water management should be viewed over an extended period - not just prolonged drought conditions.

My offer is to provide the Ministers with a tour of the Basin in its current state of health which is simply magnificent. I would also point out the extent to which landholders and irrigators currently manage for environmental outcomes; a fact conveniently ignored by critics of food and fibre producers.



Three points I would like to make:

1. Buy backs are a lazy way of doing government business particularly in any restructure of industry. The challenge for water savings is to initially target poor and inefficient infrastructure with a 'modernisation' approach. This would include improved water delivery and storage systems saving enormous amounts of water to be shared. Many projects have been identified across the Basin but poor co-ordination between the State and Commonwealth has led to glacial progress.
2. The water modelling of our valleys has to be challenged. The IQQM is a program that simulates water movement. It was designed initially for regulated water systems when developing the Water Sharing Plans in NSW ten years ago. The modelling has been described by some hydrologists as having a variance of 10% - 50%. It was not designed for unregulated rivers and certainly not for groundwater. The current Guide and planning process must cease until a legitimate modelling process is developed.
3. The correct instrument and process for managing water in our valleys is via the Water Sharing Plans. Everyone in the water industry from the communities, industry and the environment, are used in the process; particularly in the north of the basin. They are only in their first generation and they have not had the time needed to evaluate their effectiveness.

Failure to support these basic actions by the MDBA, overseen by the Federal Labor Government, would only confirm that the process has been hijacked by some of our friends from the Labor-Green-Independent rainbow.

My NSW Liberals and Nationals' colleagues and I will not be supporting a plan that results in lost productivity, reduced rural employment and that undermines local commitment to a balance between healthy rivers and healthy communities.

Kind regards,

Kevin Humphries MP

Member for Barwon

Shadow Minister for Western NSW