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Senate Committee on Rural Affairs and Transport
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- (1) The Burrunjuck Dam was built to Water the inland and to Settle soldiers from World War 1 on the land. It was a Government Scheme. The Dam supplies some 1045 966 Megs of water and supports the major towns of Leeton and Griffith, as well as other smaller towns and villages.
- (2) The Blowering Dam was built to harness water from the Snowy Mountains Scheme. It also was a government scheme. The Dam holds 1546639 megs of water. The government decided to develop a new Irrigation Area to utilize this water. Thus the town and Irrigation Area of Coleambally, was born.
- (3) I was an original settler at Coleambally in 1963. Very newly married we lived in a shed without power and telephone for a time. We produced 4 boys all who did all their schooling at Coleambally. We now have grandsons who now go to the same school as their Father.
- (4) June owned and ran a dress shop in the town for 16 years.
- (5) We eventually sold the farm and now own the local hotel which we bought with our family in 2000.
- (6) The amount of water taken from the approx 600,000 mg's of water for Coleambally are 60 000 mgs Enviromental to SA. approx 15 yrs ago. 30 000 mgs of water bought and permanently left the Area lately. This 30000 megs represents about 30 farms or 10% reduction. It includes Federal buyback water. The figure is difficult to get and the Federal buyback is unobtainable as far as I know.
- (7) As well farmers have achieved water savings of about 30% in efficiency in rice growing.
- (8) Since the year 2000 the allocations to farmers at Coleambally have been

General Security

2000-2001	90%
2001-2002	72%
2002-2003	38
2003-2004	41%
2004-2005	40%

2005-2006	54%
2006-2007	10%
2007-2008	18%
2008-2009	21%
2009-2010	

Farmers have also been told that they will not get more than 83% of their allocation. The closer to the Dam wall a water user is, the less water has to be stored. To supply 1 mg of water to the Lower Lakes in S.A. can need a release of up to 3.1 mgs from Hume Dam.

(9) The amount of water to Coleambally is being whittled away, and no account of the massive savings growers have made, appears to have had the slightest impact in the demands that Coleambally should have less. This constant shifting of the goal posts must stop, otherwise everything will grind to a halt.

Some Figures.

(10) The Hotel in 2001-2002 made a profit of \$222,425-00
2003-2004 \$153,590-00
2004-2005 \$112,402-00

(11) The profits from 05 to 2010 varied between \$49,000-00 and \$70,000-00. The only competition we have in town is the local Club. They showed a profit this year of \$35881 This was their first profit since 2006. This profit included a Government subsidy of \$70752 and a donation of \$35000+ from the local Bank. So it is not as if we had lost business by bad management. The extra business just did not exist.

This shows the importance of water to the whole area. On ordinary expectations the Hotel should be now making about \$300,000-00pa. You can see, starting at 2003-2004 years how the drought gradually tightens its grip. The Rice Mill closes, farmers curtail their spending making Stock and station Agents and Grain buyers, fertiliser suppliers all suffer. The local supermarket and dress shops, the Café all go down. And on and on it spreads.

(12) Now with a return to a wetter year and hopefully a string of wetter years, we are faced with a deliberate man made drought. Possibly a 45% reduction in available water. I believe that anything more than a 5% reduction in water allocation will cause major distress.

Suggested Solutions

(13) Pipelines should be laid each side of the lower lakes to supply those farms and towns with water. This will save thousands of megalitres of water evaporating, as well as the transportation losses to the lakes. In times of big inflows surplus water should be sent into the lower lakes to flush them. This is how the system originally worked.

(14) The price of water should be set at the Dam wall. This means that if a property suffers transportation losses of 25% then that property has to buy 1.33 megs of water for every meg of water delivered. If Governments are sincere in their wish to make the best use of the available water this will have that effect. It would encourage Authorities and private owners to use all the water conservation methods available. If Governments wish to send water to supply the Red gum forests or flush the lower lakes then their supplies have to be treated the same as everyone else. Government should also pay its share of any storage charges. Thus if transportation losses to the Barmah forest are 50% then the Government needs to pay for 2 megs of water to deliver the forest 1 Meg. Perhaps then the Government will realize how valuable water is to everyone, and it stops authorities buying 1 meg of water at say Wagga then taking 2 megs from the system for their pet projects, and leaving everyone else poorer for it.

(15) Extra dams should be constructed wherever possible and used to capture surplus water in times of excess like we have had lately. These storages can be anywhere along the river. They would both conserve our most valuable asset in times of plenty and contribute to the supply of water when needed, and also help in flood mitigation in wet years.

(16) Governments should immediately cease buying back water. To continue to do so makes this inquiry impotent. If the enquiry found that there was no need to buyback any further water it would be too late for those whose water had been bought in the meantime, and it would also be too late for those areas and towns dependent on that water.

(17) With any further lessening of farms and families at Coleambally the hotel will become unviable. It would not matter if we gave the Hotel away, the person getting it would not survive. Traditionally the hotel has been worth approx 2 rice farms. This would mean all things being equal then the hotel would be worth about 2 million dollars. At present I don't think we would get \$600 000-00 for it. I implore your committee to consider this, and to realize that these consequences will be repeated hundreds or thousands of times all over the basin.

Yours Faithfully,