



Hon Tony Windsor MP
Chairman
Inquiry into the Impact of the Murray Darling Basin Plan in Regional Australia

Dear Tony,

I refer to your terms of reference related to the impact of the Murray Darling Basin Plan in Regional Australia and specifically the 3rd term: *the role of governments, the agricultural industry and the research sector in developing infrastructure and technologies aimed at supporting water efficiency within the Murray Darling Basin.*

Research & Development and more importantly its adoption is a missing link in the MDBA plan and the SEWPAC programs. This is needed for;

- *Environmental water and land management to achieve water efficient healthy rivers - ie research that is being done locally on the ground with best practice local engagement.*
- *Irrigation modernisation to produce more food crop per drop in a sustainable manor - To produce more with less will require technology and knowledge advances. For example, new advances for evaporation reduction, understanding of the nexus around water, energy and carbon use/savings as well as soils, salinity, and the water balance, and economics*
- *Social, economic and cultural data / knowledge- the guide has highlighted how poorly understood and documented regional communities are. We need a better socio economic monitoring framework, rather than one off consultancies being done at random for the guide. This is needed for all regional development programs to enable adaptation to new sustainable diversion limits.*
- *Skills, and human capacity advancement to grow our regional social capital and human capacity. This will lead to long term outcomes (ie skills base, education and training and new business opportunities).*

Recommendation:

Establish a Northern Murray Darling Regional Research and Innovation Centre.

A partnership of the Federal Government, States, RDAs, regional NRM, local universities and others. The centre would be a small administration hub focused around themes listed above that actively links institutions and stakeholders, stimulates/funds research and adoption priority needs, promotes coordination and cooperation, promotes effective transfer of knowledge and adoption and ensures tangible outcomes. A similar concept maybe needed in southern basin, but would be different due to different R&D infrastructure and networks, industries and communities of practice.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss some options.

Yours sincerely

Dr Guy Roth,