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SUBMISSION TO THE MURRAY-DARLING BASIN AUTHORITY REGARDING
THE ***“Guide to the proposed Basin Plan: overview”***

FROM: SANDY WALLACE NOMINEES PTY. LTD.,
As trustee, for THE SANDY WALLACE FAMILY TRUST,

09/12/2010

The Sandy Wallace Family Trust operates a dairy farm in the Kiewa Valley at Kergunyah on 197ha, which includes 40ha of irrigation; a variety of environmental projects have been carried out over several years, ***we care about the health and future of the Kiewa River and consequently the Murray Darling Basin.***

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS: If there is no water in the system due to severe drought, buying or acquiring 3000 to 7000 GL of water right, will not produce any more water, the large amount of money spent so far buying water rights could have been far better spent on more innovative ideas. It is our understanding that the amount of irrigation water used is already totally controlled!!

We consider that “environment” should be a much more embracing term than only the ***quantity*** of water which reaches the extremities of the Murray River; we acknowledge that for the purpose of this plan, that appears to be the highest, or only, priority.

The data or is it ***“science”***, for this area seems to indicate that there is very little, if any, knowledge of the North East of Victoria available to the MDBA. Considering 38% of the Murray Darling Basin water comes from this area, we believe that at least SOME research should be carried out, or please make use of the current available documents.

These further comments relate to the data and proposals regarding the ***Kiewa River Catchment only.***

The Kiewa River provides water for the Murray in winter, which enables the Hume Dam to be almost closed off so that water, not only for other irrigators, but also for the environment, can be saved for the summer months.

QUALITY OF WATER IN THE KIEWA RIVER: The good quality of the water in the Kiewa River is the result of a large outlay of money and effort by authorities, farmers and individuals. The writer was a member of the Kiewa Water Trust (water supply for Kiewa-Tangambalanga) for several years and in the late 1970’s when the quality of the water was tested it was found to be extremely bad, in an effort to establish which reach of the river was the culprit, further tests were carried out, it was established that ***every reach was bad.*** Since then, all dairy farmers have installed effluent dams; tobacco

farming has ceased and in its place a variety of other enterprises have been developed olive trees, green tea, grapes, etc. Individual farmers have continued developing several environmental projects e.g. fencing off and vegetating eroding creeks, having willows removed, fencing off river frontages, planting native vegetation, studying and spreading a variety of dung beetles, etc., all of which assists in maintaining and improving the quality of the water. The townships of Kiewa and Tangambalanga now have sewerage.

KIEWA CATCHMENT - EXTREMELY HIGH FIRE RISK AREA. The week before the “Black Saturday” fires there were 4 lightning strikes in the mountains close to Kergunyah, all were extinguished successfully. Although not threatened by the MDBA’s plan (we hope) we would like to stress the absolute importance of the spread, availability and access to farm dams of any size for the use of the local C.F.A. Brigade and individuals, to attack fires quickly before they escape and become total disasters. This also lessens the amount of water used if the fire should get out of control.

IRRIGATION. Table 5.2 Page 50 Outflows, Kiewa 96% of “without development outflows”.

1. No taxpayer’s money has been used to create a dam for irrigation in the Kiewa Catchment.
2. Most, if not all irrigation, has been developed at the individual farmer’s expense, including planning, laser levelling, dam, pipes, pump, channels, run-off dams etc. Some farmers may have been able to obtain grants to help fund efficiencies during the drought.
3. Irrigation is only carried out on part of any farm.
4. These pockets of green in a severe summer offer “safer havens” in a wild fire for stock, farm families, and neighbours, and can slow the spread of the fire, helping it to be contained and fought.
5. ***No evaporation savings can be made on public infrastructure, as all water is metered at the farmer’s expense as it leaves the river, evaporation savings would have to be on private land, which would be minimal, at the moment it is included in the total of irrigation water. Table 5.3 Page 52 total of irrigation and other uses 2.1 GL., this is labelled as Farm Dams impact!!***

FORESTRY PLANTATIONS. Table 5.3 page 52. ***7.1 GL of water!!!!*** We can’t find that many forestry plantations!!

If you can’t reach the ridiculous 40-45% reduction in current diversion limits, if taken only from watercourse diversions, will you have to pull out the forest plantations, if they can be found?

TREES. If trees are such a problem, how are we supposed to assist in carbon reduction, without planting a lot more trees?

The Kiewa Catchment contains thousands of beautiful, very healthy, river red gums, despite the fact that there had not, until this year, been a flood on the Kiewa either for many years, are the only important river red gums in the Ramsar Wetlands or don’t the Kiewa wetlands matter? During the drought it was common for 50 ducks to be on just one of our effluent dams alone.

Figure 6.1 Floodplain map shows no inundation for the Kiewa River, despite the fact that it has been constantly on the news for the last few weeks as one of the few rivers with minor to moderate flooding.

Section 3. page 25. History list does not include the increase in the size of the Hume Dam, which involved *moving the township of Tallangatta*, another example of lack of local knowledge.

RECYCLING OF WATER. The groundwater which supplies our dairy is reused twice before it flows into our effluent dam, and then if and when the second dam fills, it is spread on our paddocks.

In conclusion we believe that there is minimal opportunity to acquire savings of water on the Kiewa, also there has been no previous purchases of water, which would mean the 40-45% reduction would multiply further and irrigation in this area would have to cease, an incredible situation for the upper catchment which uses small quantities of water due to the higher rainfall, has a shorter irrigation season and in fact further development should be encouraged. Dairying in the Kiewa and district supports a large workforce employed by associated industries.

Signed by Noelene Wallace,
Secretary/Director.