

The Hon Tony Windsor MP  
Independent Member for New England  
17 10 10

Submission No: 213
Date Received: 6/12/10
Secretary: SC

Dear Mr Windsor,

Many thanks for your comments on how best to ensure the Murray Darling basin is ecologically, socially and economically sustainable for future generations.

Today even the Hon Tony Abbott MP was spot on with the reason for today's huge challenge to regain a sustainable balance: "Too many governments [in the past] have allocated too much water."

Still today the health of the Murray may not be as important to the wider community as how we Aussies did in the Commonwealth Games where of course we achieved fantastic results. But in the long term it would be extremely beneficial if a little less funding was provided for our sporting elite and a little more funding for community education of the following, for even intelligent and educated politicians including our former Prime Minister do not accept or understand that their children's world has vital, finite resources such as water and that their promotion of an Australia that is "big" in numerical terms, if realised, would result in a greatly diminished quality of life for our children.

We need clean, carbon-constrained air, unpolluted water, soil with low levels of salinity and species diversity.

A viable economy is based on environmental integrity and social cohesion; not the other way round.

Barry Commoner's Laws of Ecology: Everything is connected to everything else. Everything must go somewhere. In one line as it pertains to the River Murray; we all live downstream.

As can be seen by recent more frequent news reports, climate change is an additional serious issue that has really started to kick in with its more frequent and severe weather events so that knowing what is now known, avoiding transitioning to a world where we do things differently, is no longer acceptable in our children's world that is changing so greatly.

The developed world did reach a stage where slavery was no longer acceptable, where it was no longer acceptable for women not to have the vote, for thirty million koalas to be slaughtered in Queensland in one year, where whaling in Moreton Bay was no longer acceptable. We have also seen the end of the Berlin Wall and apartheid in South Australia.

And now the community needs to be educated to understand the reasons why we must transition to a state where we all use less water overall, not just those living in the Murray Darling region, so that adequate environmental outcomes are viable into the future.

On a related matter, more community education is required so that the public start to use durable materials for durable or reusable products rather than increasing quantities of single-use, disposable products that are best suited to a throw-away world. Greater materials efficiency also results in the following efficiencies in manufacturing processes: less water and energy use, less water, air, and manufacturing waste as well as less post-consumer waste. The point being that all these manufacturing inputs are locked into a plastic Tupperware lunch box that is washed and reused again and again for years. But these same manufacturing costs are incurred every time a single-use plastic bag is used. Many of the public still do not consider this when they try to use less water. And this is one area requiring public education—the environmental consequences of the choices we make on a daily basis as consumers in a finite world.

There is one legislative measure that would enable every citizen to be part of the water solution rather than continuing on as part of the water problem.

I refer to an Australia-wide re-introduction of Container Deposit Legislation (C.D.L.) for beverage containers. This would result in a far higher return rate of beverage containers for recycling as well as a noticeable level of litter reduction .

C.D.L. can then be the pre-cursor to the reintroduction of Containers Designed to Last-the return of the refillable beverage containers. Surely with the huge challenges we face with the provision of adequate supplies of water as well as climate change, this is the type of legislative change that must now occur if we are genuine in our concerns for both water, energy and materials conservation and climate change.

Many thanks for your on-going constructive comments about how best to ensure we pass on to our children and grandchildren a n Australia that is sustainable.

All the best in the future you choose for your family, your staff and their children.

Yours sincerely,

Harry Johnson.

Volunteer, Kingfisher Recycling Centre, Aspley Special School.