



Wooloondool Farms

ABN: 90 040 431 050

The Committee Secretary
House of representatives
PO Box 6021
Canberra, ACT 2600

Dear Sir,

I am a second generation irrigator and have lived on the banks of the Murrumbidgee River at Hay in western NSW for the past 45 years. We derive all of our income from the river as we have a 1000ha irrigation property. The climate of our area does not allow us to grow crops which are not irrigated as the soils are too heavy and the rainfall too infrequent.

My father was a pioneer in the irrigation industry in our region laser levelling fields and putting in drainage recycling systems, well before it was common to do so. All our crops are grown on permanent raised beds which allow control of water, reduce waterlogging and increase aeration of the soil. Over the 45 years of farming we have been able to increase the organic matter of the soil and the fertility which has allowed us to grow a wide range of irrigated crops, both for food and fibre.

We have spent considerable expense on developing the cropping areas to where it is today more than what the land itself would bring if we were to sell it (my bank manager told me today that the land had been re-valued down to \$350/ha and would therefore need more security for my loan) This land costs us more than \$1000/ha to develop!. Once virgin land has been bought into a cropping programme such as ours it is very hard to reverse this and turn it back into dryland grazing. Not only would we be suffering severe losses due to the increased value of our development but the land would be overrun with introduced weeds.

Our property solely relies on the river as its lifeblood and without it, it would not exist. We have just been through a prolonged period of drought which has pushed the boundaries of our very existence - but we are still here and we wish to remain, but can only do so with water.

In our region over the past five years the water allocation has been minimal and we accept this! If there are no inflows into the dams we don't get the water and neither does the environment- this is what would happen in nature. We accept that the river systems

have been over-allocated in the Murray Darling basin but we also need a balance. A fair go for all concerned. We need a strong commitment that the new plan will have this balance i.e. balance the needs of the environment, the economy and the communities. Communities like our local town of Hay were born out of the existence of the river and we will not let the river die, that is not what we want.

For many years our property supported four families and also numerous contractors around the area. With the prolonged drought this has reduced our turnover from a few million dollars and a few hundred thousand dollars. This has been hard and we have faced many challenges but we have survived but cannot go on indefinitely. We have had to halve our workforce losing good men who have worked for us for over 17 years. Some of these left the township altogether to seek employment elsewhere! This has put downward pressure on our housing prices. Our schools have also been greatly affected losing large numbers of students in the past few years. We have gone from a peak of 363 students to an enrolment of just 218 for the forthcoming 2011 school year a loss of 40%. This has hit our town in so many dramatic ways and we hope that with the passing of the drought things will return to normal; but of course water buybacks have put a dampener on things returning to normal. With most of the water entitlements in our region being private diverters water sales are very easy as there are no restrictions (unlike water sales from water corporations like MIA, CIA). We have therefore come out of the drought with a lot less than we went in. So The Basin Plan has forced generations of families off their farms -how is this going to keep our communities strong and vibrant? How are towns like ours going to survive with dwindling populations and productivity going backwards?

Where does the Australian government want to source their food? Locally or internationally! This plan is going to make sure that food production in The Basin is decimated - and all to keep the man-made lower lakes (one large evaporation pond) with fresh water rather than its natural brackish state.

It's an absolute joke to suggest only 800 jobs will be lost - surely this is 800 jobs lost in every town in the basin or more. It is more likely to be 800 jobs lost in Hay alone.

I suggest you have a hard look at your assumptions as the entire process needs to be halted until all avenues of water savings are exhausted. This includes water use efficiency by the environment as well as irrigators.

Most farmers are conservationists as their livelihood depends upon the environment – we want to work together with government, environment and the communities we live in & love.

Please don't destroy this balance.

yours sincerely



Nick Maynard

Private water diverter and Chairman of Hay Water Users Inc.