



MJ+ST Robertson

Hon Sussan Ley MP  
Member for Farrer  
PO Box 672  
ALBURY NSW 2640.

8.12.10.

Dear Sussan

### My concern for the future of rural communities under the Guide to the Proposed Basin Plan

I am concerned for the future of rural Australians, for agriculture, food security as well as the environment. I am affected by what occurs in the Murray Darling Basin. I have received information regarding the "Murray Darling Basin Guide to the proposed Basin Plan" (The Plan) which gives me no confidence in "The Plan" or the processes that have been undertaken in the preparation of "The Plan".

In an effort to mitigate the damage already inflicted on residents of the Murray Darling Basin and lift the blanket of uncertain financial security and investment which has been cast over the region, I ask that until all of the enquiries into "The Plan" are finalised and the findings made public:

1. "The Plan" be precluded from consideration immediately.
2. The Hon. Tony Burke – Minister for Water confirms the "Sustainable Diversion Limit Figures" referenced in that guide are to be reviewed and those put forward in "The Plan" are no longer up for consideration.

I believe that currently, the *Water Act* does not address the triple-bottom line, which is outlined by the National Water Initiative, the basis of the *Act*. It is heavily weighted in favour of the environment, and a true balance between the environment, economy and social aspects needs to be attained. To this end I ask:

3. The *Water Act 2007* is reviewed and amendments made, with a view to making it more fair and equitable to all communities in the Murray Darling Basin, and compliant with the National Water Initiatives' triple-bottom line approach, treating the social, economic and environmental aspects of the Basin equally.

I ask that the inquiries currently being held and any future "Plans" take into consideration the following factors:

- The socio-economic factors that will affect rural communities brought about by any plan once adopted;
- Water that has already been taken or purchased from the MDB – for example the National Water Initiative, Water for Rivers, State Government purchases and the Living Murray Initiative, amongst others;
- The Parliamentary and Senate inquiries should look at water management from a holistic perspective, not simply water for the environment;
- Initiatives beyond taking water from food production should be fully investigated; for example, upgrades of depression era water infrastructure, environmental efficiencies programs, on-farm efficiency projects, storm water reclamation, the list is long and the studies are exhaustive;
- The significance of domestic food security and the future needs for food;
- The wellbeing and continuation of one of Australia's major export industries;
- The Governance of the environmental water that is "saved";
- That any Government money that is allocated as recompense goes to infrastructure and socio-economic development, before going to water buy backs, to ensure that the best outcomes for rural communities can be met.

The inquiries should also take into consideration the following scenarios:

- Food security contingency plans, should the production of locally produced food be affected by more than 20%
- Contingency plan for an influx of people to the cities from rural areas brought about by substantial loss of employment opportunities in rural areas

I believe an inquiry led by an organisation, labelled an "independent commission" undertaking an "independent study", should be truly independent, I therefore request that:

- All advertising undertaken by the Commonwealth Department of Water, on behalf of the MDBA, be stopped immediately;
- That all "best available" information used by the MDBA have a requirement to be peer reviewed; and
- I also demand that the "local knowledge" of rural communities, is actively sought and engaged across all matters of the Basin Plan, to deliver an outcome that considers all aspects of the issues, to deliver a truly independent report.

~~We elect our Politicians with the expectation that they will do what is right for ALL~~ Australians. Your representation to the Hon Tony Burke MP, Federal Minister of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, on my behalf, would be greatly appreciated.

I look forward to receiving your and Minister Burke's responses.

Yours sincerely,

Your constituent,