



15 November 2012

The Secretary
House Standing Committee on Regional Australia
House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

Submission: Water Amendment (Water for the Environment Special Account) Bill 2012

Thankyou for the opportunity to make this brief submission in relation to the inquiry into the Water Amendment (Water for the Environment Special Account) Bill 2012.

The following are the key points which Council wishes to bring to the attention of the Committee.

- The revised Draft Murray Darling Basin Plan still contains no environmental watering plan. In the absence of the environmental watering plan, there is no evidence base as how the strategies within the "Water Amendment (Water for the Environment Special Account) Bill 2012" will be achieved.

The first strategy of the Bill (Refer 86 AA (3)(a) is:

"to ease or remove constraints on the capacity to deliver environmental water to the environmental assets of the Murray-Darling Basin."

The above strategy can only be achieved after numerous questions are answered, such as but not limited to:

- What specific environmental assets are to be protected ?
- How will the additional water be delivered to these assets ?
- What is the cost/benefit analysis of delivering this water ?
- What impacts will the additional water flow have on existing river banks and adjacent landholders ?
- What are the specific capacity constraints within the river system ?
- Which of these constraints will be targeted for removal and why ?
- What will be the economic and social impacts on communities along the river system ?

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Without an Environmental Watering Plan in place, the above questions cannot be addressed.

The second strategy within the Bill (Refer 86 AA (3)(b) is:

“increasing the volume of the Basin water resources that is available for environmental use by up to 450 gigalitres.”

There must be additional/new funding guaranteed to secure the 450 gigalitres. While the Bill does forecast the availability of the additional funding there has been no commitment by the Government to actually deliver these funds.

The additional water must be secured via additional infrastructure works and there must also be detailed social and economic assessment undertaken at a local level to ensure no detriment to Basin communities.

Further, the ability of the river system to deliver the additional 450 gigalitres of water is subject to the removal of capacity constraints which must be assessed through the preparation of an environmental watering plan as referred to above.

Thankyou for the opportunity to make this submission and should you require further information please contact me on [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

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BRETT STONESTREET
GENERAL MANAGER