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To Whom It May Concern:

I support the Murray-Darling Basin Authority's six strategic objectives for the proposed Basin Plan (p.176 of the Guide). I support the additional volume of 4,000 GL yr-1 of water for the environment, even though I would prefer to see larger volumes of water returned to these floodplains. Floodplain ecosystems have been massively degraded and require our urgent protection to ensure their survival for future generations.

My research on an important native mammal (yellow-footed antechinus) on the Murray River floodplain showed that floods were beneficial, while removal of fallen timber and large trees was detrimental, to these animals. I am writing this submission not only as a scientist, who is familiar with this floodplain ecosystem, but also as a member of the public and resident of the Basin for 11 years. I would like to make the following points.

1. Proponents of larger water allocations for the environment would need to be extremely brave to express their opinions at the public meetings. Opponents of environmental water allocations, who were burning copies of the guide, were very intimidating.

2. Irrigators are not the only residents of the Basin. The views of Indigenous Nations on the benefits of flooding should be taken into account (Murray and Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations Farley Consulting Group, 2003).

3. Exporting crops, whose cultivation contributes to massive negative impacts on the environment, means exporting water and importing land degradation (such as salinity).

4. We should learn from the mismanagement of rivers around the world. For example, the devastating Soviet schemes, which for the sake of growing cotton in the desert destroyed the Aral Sea. The Aral Sea has shrunk by 40% because of irrigation extractions from the rivers Amu Darya and Syr Darya.

5. It is odd to consider environmental and social impacts as separate and competing with each other. We are part of the environment. Humans, being animals, have three basic needs for survival - oxygen, water and food. By destroying the environment we deplete these fundamental resources and endanger our own survival.

6. River red gum forests provide people with relaxation and spiritual connection. I have studied these forests since 2003. Conducting fieldwork in Barmah and Gunbower forests, in 2009, helped me to heal after catastrophic fires, which had destroyed my Kinglake community. Given the massive landscape changes in Australia in the last 200 years, it is important to preserve the last remaining natural habitats, not only for wildlife but also for people.

7. Arsonists are known to light fires in the floodplain forests along the Murray River. These forests dry out when deprived of adequate flooding, increasing the risk of fire, to which they are not adapted. Restoring historical flooding regimes would reduce the risk of fires in these forests, not fuel reduction burning or grazing.

8. The North-South pipeline diverts water to Melbourne from the Goulburn River, a tributary of the Murray River. Easing Melbourne's water shortage by stealing water from the Goulburn-Broken catchment is going to decrease the likelihood of floods on the floodplains of the Murray River. It is appalling that drinking water is used for flushing toilets. This water should not be pumped to Melbourne, or diverted by irrigators, but allowed to flow through the ecosystems of the Murray floodplain.

Yours faithfully,
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