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December 10, 2010

Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia
PO Box 6021 – Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: Draft Murray Darling Basin Authority Plan

I am writing to urge you to oppose the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) Draft Plan for the Murray Darling Basin.

After attending the MDBA community consultation meeting in Moree I am not convinced that the scientific data presented in the guide is grounded in reality and it appears to be highly questionable in terms of specific hydrological and ecological characteristics of the Gwydir Valley. In addition, the recent resignation of the MDBA Chair, Michael Taylor, has severely lowered my confidence in the authority to balance the environmental outcomes with the socio-economic outcomes. Furthermore, the MDBA have failed to engage local knowledge and expertise, which I believe to be a significant oversight on their part.

From a personal perspective I own and manage an agricultural business in Moree that is directly reliant on the irrigation industry for all operations. I employ eight people in that business, I have a young family to support and I am highly concerned that the MDBA Plan's proposed water reductions will threaten job security, my business and my family's livelihood. I may be forced to relocate my business if the proposed water cuts go ahead. This will mean that the local businesses, community groups and sporting clubs I support will suffer.

I would also like to point out that Gwydir Valley has been in severe drought over the past 5-10 years and resultant rural decline has negatively affected population levels and job prospects in the area. Further water reductions will only restrict post-drought recovery and lead to further population and job loss. In addition, Moree has limited alternative industries such as mining to pursue, unlike surrounding areas such as Gunnedah and Narrabri.

I believe investment in irrigation infrastructure in the Gwydir Valley should replace government buybacks of water entitlements as the preferred strategy to deliver environmental outcomes.

Government water buybacks only profit the seller and have no long-term economic benefits for the community. As a region renowned for innovation in improving irrigation efficiencies I believe it is both unfair and unjustified that the Gwydir Valley should suffer the greatest impact. I expect the government to deliver on its' commitment to investing in irrigation infrastructure and to ensure that grants are not significantly reduced by tax bills.

Please help us to protect our livelihood and to ensure the survival of our community.

Sincerely,

Andrew Parkes