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Submission to:

House of Representatives Standing Committee,
Inquiry into the impact of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan in Regional Australia

We wish to make comment on the proposals made within the draft released by the Murray Darling Basin Authority, specifically the Kiewa system with regard to effect upon ourselves. We are dairy farmers, milking 420 cows on leased property which has a licence to irrigate from the river. We believe reducing or removing water from our valley will have a very real and measurable effect upon production and employment.

The Kiewa Valley has enormous potential for agricultural production which is driven in our area by innovative and progressive farmers who have learnt and adapted to what has undoubtedly been ten very difficult years managing extremes of climate. We have become more efficient with water usage, able to grow more cattle feed per megalitre of water. The use of irrigation water, predominantly as autumn start up allows us to maximise home grown feed and helps us to minimise the effects of drought and other variables on our business. Farmers as a general rule manage their environment with care, seeking to farm in a sustainable way for the future, our land is not only part of our business, we live on the land, it is part of our lives.

One reason that the Kiewa Valley is able to use irrigation water very efficiently is our proximity to the source, surely this must be considered rather than using this same water hundreds of kilometres away.

Our river system left to nature, would never run all year round. Australia and the Murray Darling Basin has historically had dry years and floods, we feel it could be argued very strongly the recent floods over much of the basin have created environmental damage on a huge scale. The draft plan seems set to separate the environment from economic and social considerations and can only be viewed as an unbalanced, very one sided plan. Who or what is able to determine what constitutes good health or otherwise of our catchments? We would challenge the science that has determined at the end of a ten year drought that the Murray Darling Basin is "in crisis".

We would also like to see the MDBA review the "no dams" policy. Dams have proven to be insurance policies against dry times, both for irrigators and communities downstream. Surely after a spring like 2010, we are able to see opportunities to harvest and store water in times of flood against the cyclical dry seasons.

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