



28 November 2010

Tony Windsor MP  
Murray Darling Basin Authority Inquiry

Dear Tony,

**re: SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE MURRAY DARLING BASIN GUIDE / PLAN**

May I make some comments re: the MDB Guide and proposed plan.

1. To determine Sustainable Diversion Limits for Australia's Rivers (starting with the MDB) is an excellent step and will have long-term benefits.
2. The drivers of over allocation and over extraction need to be addressed viz: separation of water and property rights, the establishment of water trading and a water market, the involvement of corporate agriculture and managed investment schemes and influence of large agricultural holdings and their influence on decision making processes, the capacity of upstream users to capture / dam / divert water from rivers and other natural sources including groundwater supplies
3. The cost to taxpayers to purchase water for the environment as distinct from for example, legislation for minimum environmental flows or maximum sustainable diversion limits
4. The socio-economic costs of the failure to put in place boundaries to environmental damage such as sustainable diversion, leading to a false premise for regional agricultural economies and communities and consequent costs of scaling back unsupportable agricultural activities particularly in marginal land
5. That groundwater is an integral part of hydrological and must not be 'mined' or perceived as a cash crop for 'extraction' and sale.
6. That the Snowy catchments are not included in the MDB Guide and proposed plan. By definition, the Snowy River catchment diversions are a key part of the MDB and Murrumbidgee agricultural sectors and must also have Sustainable Diversion Limits. The legislation requires amending to include the Snowy Catchments and sustainable diversion limits applied to these key rivers. The Snowy Water Licence must also be amended accordingly.
7. Note made of the diversion of the Snowy and upper Eucumbene and Murrumbidgee and other Snowy Scheme streams and rivers and that these water ways must also be apportioned SDLs.
8. Underscoring that the Snowy Scheme must be returned to public management through de-corporatisation so that commercial imperatives and commercial in confidence premises do not hijack best practice in river management.
9. That savings made through not purchasing water for the environment (instead legislation will achieve the same result) may be applied to establishing new non-agricultural industries in the Murray Darling Basin and MIA, or applied to enable people, families and communities to make the transition if they so choose, to new industries, employment. A part of the savings may be utilised for geothermal energy exploration, establishment of wind farms in some areas, establishment of solar farms, the creation of native food crops or transition to dry land farming.

I trust that the inquiry is successful Tony.

All the best and regards

Acacia Rose