

DATE: 25-11-10

John Dunmore

Submission No. 88
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SC

**RE: SUBMISSION IN REGARD TO THE
“GUIDE TO THE DRAFT MURRAY DARLING BASIN PLAN”**

I am concerned for the future rural Australian communities and Australian agriculture, as well as the environment. I have received information regarding the “Murray Darling Basin Guide to the proposed Basin Plan” (The Guide) which gives me no confidence in *The Guide* or the processes that have been undertaken in the preparation of that guide.

In an effort to mitigate the damage already inflicted on residents of the Murray Darling Basin and lift the blanket of uncertain financial security and investment which has been cast over the region, I ask that until all of the inquiries into *The Guide* are finalised and the findings made public:

1. *The Guide* be precluded from consideration immediately.
2. The Hon. Tony Burke – Minister for Water confirms the “Sustainable Diversion Limit Figures” referenced in that guide are to be reviewed and those put forward in “*The Guide*” are no longer up for consideration.

I believe that currently, the *Water Act* does not address the triple-bottom line which is outlined by the National Water Initiative, the basis of the *Water Act*. It is heavily weighted in favour of the environment, and a true balance between the environmental, economic and social aspects needs to be obtained. To this end I ask

that the *Water Act 2007* is reviewed and amendments made, with a view to making it more fair and equitable to all communities in the Murray Darling Basin, and compliant with the National Water Initiatives’ triple-bottom line approach, treating the social, economic and environmental aspects of the Basin equally.

I ask that the inquiries currently being held and any future “Plans” that may be composed, be advised to take into consideration the following factors:

- The socio-economic factors that will affect rural communities brought about by any plan

It is crucial that our communities can be assured that they are valued by the nation and that the final basin plan will provide equal protection for the environment, economic and social assets of the basin.

Government needs to roll out infrastructure improvements to assist farmers and create water saving in the Murray Darling Basin before they accumulate more water from buy backs. This will help the rest of the community to remain and be viable in the surrounding districts. It could be found water recovered from infrastructure improvements will save water buy backs. Water buy backs will take peoples jobs where infrastructure improvement will create jobs and business for the districts.

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3.

- Water that has already been taken or purchased from the MDB – for example the National Water Initiative, Water for Rivers, State Government purchases and the Living Murray initiative, amongst others;
 - The Parliamentary and Senate inquiries should look at water management from a holistic perspective, not simply water for the environment;
- Water buy backs based on taking water from food production should be fully

- The Parliamentary and Senate inquiries should look at water management from a holistic perspective, not simply water for the environment;
- Initiatives beyond taking water from food production should be fully investigated; for example, upgrades of depression era water infrastructure, on-farm efficiency projects, storm water reclamation, water conservation options for all parts of the Basin urban and rural, towns and cities, the list options is long and the studies are exhaustive;
- The significance of domestic food security and the future needs for food;
- The wellbeing and continuation of one of Australia's major export industries;
- The Governance of the environmental water that is "saved";
- That any Government money that is allocated as recompense goes to infrastructure and socio-economic development, before going to water buy backs, to ensure that the best outcomes for rural communities can be met.

The inquiries should also take into consideration the following scenarios:

- Food security contingency plans, should the production of locally produced food be affected by more than 15 per cent;
- Contingency plan for an influx of people to the cities from rural areas brought about by substantial loss of employment opportunities in rural areas

I believe an inquiry led by an organisation, labelled an "independent commission" undertaking an "independent study", should be truly independent, I therefore request that:

- All advertising undertaken by the Commonwealth Department of Water, on behalf of the MDBA, be stopped immediately;
- That all "best available" information used by the MDBA have a requirement to be peer reviewed; and
- I also demand that the "local knowledge" of rural communities, is actively sought and engaged across all matters of the Basin Plan, to deliver an outcome that considers all aspects of the issues, to deliver a truly independent report.

I look forward to receiving the Authority's response.

Yours sincerely,

John T. Dunmore