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Committee Secretary
House Standing Committee on Regional Australia
House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
18 December 2010

Dear Sir/Madam,

Submission from the Murray River Action Group on the Murray Darling Basin Plan

The first point we wish to make is to express a very deep concern on the accuracy of much of the data being presented to us. We believe there is a far greater emphasis being placed on water for the environment at the expense of agriculture and production and peoples' livelihoods.

At a recent meeting of the United Nations it was clearly stated that the world will have to increase food production by 80% to meet future requirements. Australia was singled out as one of the countries most likely to be able to achieve those increases. Therefore it is only reasonable to believe that Australia may well have to place into food production, lands that have either been removed from farming or locked up in Parks. Much of the background comments leading up to this draft plan would indicate that some people believed it was never going to rain again. People have forgotten that Australia is a dry continent with much climate variation. Droughts, followed by floods has been the norm.

Two key points on the environment are firstly: no one really knows just how much environmental water is required on the Murray in our reach between Hume and Mulwala the amounts of environmental flows are ridiculous and would lead to environmental degradation as well as flooding huge areas of private property. To support this just at present, big numbers of old river red gum trees are falling over because they are too wet and water logged. The second point is that with some visionary engineering works, many wet lands could have water delivered to them, achieving a beneficial outcome but using far less water. Those of us that have lived and farmed on the river all our lives, have a sound knowledge of our flood plains and should be involved far more in decision making. Decisions are being made and influenced by people who are distanced from the local area and with little understanding of local management.

We do not want a repetition of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Councils River Red Gum Investigation whereby over two thirds of community appointed people totally opposed VEAC recommendations and yet the Victorian Government adopted them all, so much for consultation. It is well time, country people made decisions impacting upon them instead of people with little practical knowledge and experience in land management imposing their views upon us.

It has been stated a number of times that the Murray Darling Basin is in poor health, we believe this is very misleading. We can not comment on the whole basin but we would emphatically state that in our area the Murray River and flood plains are indeed very healthy and this has been acknowledged by DSE personnel. Recently a Government led inspection on a few of our members' properties made the comment that this is in pristine condition, the land referred to, is managed by farmers.

Yours Sincerely,
Marie Dunn
Honorary Secretary

Ian Lobban
President