

Dahwilly



20 December, 2010

Committee Secretariat
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Email: ra.reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Sir,

This afternoon I received Mr Tony Windsor's acknowledgement of my attached letter concerning the proposed Murray-Darling Basin Plan and advice of your Inquiry which requires the lodgement of submissions today.

I note that under the Terms of Reference your inquiry will look into options for water-saving measures or water return on a region-by-region basis with consideration given to an analysis of actual usage versus licence entitlement over the preceding 15 years.

This paragraph leads me to suspect that future reductions to water allocations may be based on an analysis of actual usage versus licence entitlement over the last 15 years. If so, this could unduly penalise the prudent, cautious mixed farmer who expects the worst case scenario in a drought and plans accordingly.

The cautious farmer does not have a boom or bust mentality, rarely qualifies for any government handouts and aims is to stay out of debt and remain in business. He does not plant crop unless he is assured that the water allocation is secure. He certainly does not go out on a limb and plant a rice crop which cannot be maintained by the percentage of the water allocation announced in October in the hope of receiving an increased water allocation later in the summer or be forced to abandon the crop or buy water to finish the crop. The cautious farmer will reduce stock numbers in a drought and will forgo planting a crop altogether in order to save water to ensure there is a sufficient carryover that can be used to grow pasture in the following year to ensure the survival of the breeding stock.

This type of farmer will not receive a favourable analysis if his future water allocation is reduced because he has used his water allocation sparingly in his steadfast determination to maintain his stock and pastures in the best possible order given a prolonged drought and ensure their survival at all costs. This type of farmer will not set the world on fire with his water usage figures but he has used his water allocation to the best of his ability given his character traits. He lives within his means and is not a risk taker.

The cautious farmer should not be penalised with an increased reduction of water allocation simply because he plans for future contingencies and does not choose to push his farming practices to the limit in unfavourable conditions and so dramatically increase the risk of further financial losses unnecessarily.

Yours faithfully,
Meredith Landale