

MENINGIE NARRUNG LAKES IRRIGATORS ASSOCIATION

Submission

Inquiry into the Water Amendment (Saving the Goulburn and Murray Rivers) Bill 2008

January 30th, 2009

The Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Environment
Communications and the Arts
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Mrs Lesley Fischer (Secretary)

The Meningie Narrung Lakes Irrigators Association hereby make public comment on the Water Amendment Bill 2008. We write as concerned community members who have years of accumulated historical and local knowledge of the southern reaches of the River Murray, the Murray Mouth, Lower Lakes, and Coorong.

Australia's River System Knows No State Borders.

It is of utmost importance that the Murray Darling Basin be treated as a whole. In respect to any physical changes, water diversions, water allocations/extractions etc.

We are concerned that not all the tributaries, including the Goulburn River is not considered within the Murray Darling Basin.

In reference to the CSIRO report, the Goulburn River is acknowledged as being one of the most degraded Rivers in the system.

The rivers of this nation were designed by "mother nature" to flow freely. Over the past 150 plus years, we have done a good job of destroying what was our most important "Icon" the mighty River Murray by overallocation and mismanagement of the system.

To the point that the River Murray has not flowed to the sea in the past 6 years. During this time the mouth of the river is kept open to the sea with the aid of dredges. This dredging enables sea water to enter the Coorong. The habitat in the Coorong has changed from estuarine to marine.

Two thirds of the Coorong is hyper saline.....in effect dead.



The Murray Mouth, Barrages and Lake Alexandrina

In normal years fresh water from Lake Alexandrina is let out through the Barrages into the Coorong and then out to sea.

That has all changed. Now there is no river flow.

Instead the Murray Mouth has been kept open for the past 6 years artificially by dredging to let sea water into the Coorong.

Changing the environment from estuarine to marine.

Rivers were made to flow and flush....This is the end of the Murray.

We who live at the southern reaches of the River Murray are well aware of the devastation that is occurring. We see the environment of the River Murray, Coorong and Lower Lakes collapse as the water recedes, our communities in the region suffering and the on going effect on our economic future disappear with that water.

What was a proud independent rural community with a vast diversity of rural enterprises, has now been brought to its knee, not because of their own mismanagement but because of over allocation exacerbated by the drought further upstream. What we see happening today was due to happen into the near future, but the drought has only brought it to a head earlier than we anticipated.

The river has become so regulated, we are actually mining our water resources, to the point that we have taken out more water than the river can naturally provide. This can only happen for so long until the system will fail. The river system is overallocated beyond its capacity.

- The River Murray is dying, it needs some understanding. It needs a common sense approach leading into the future. The rivers must be able to flow and flush right along its system.
- We believe that taking more water from the Goulburn River could have continued significant impact on the Ecological Character of the declared Coorong, Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert Wetlands.
- As this region is a RAMSAR site and as such is a matter of International Environmental Significance and is likely to have a significant impact on the Listed Threatened Species and Ecological Communities.
- The extraction of more water from the Goulburn could have an impact on this same region on the grounds that the action is a matter of International Environmental Significance and is likely to have a significant impact on the Listed Migratory Species under the JAMBA and CAMBA treaties.

Due to the Rivers being highly regulated, it is important, now than ever before to take into account the impact on the environment and communities downstream.

Without a healthy environment we have nothing. We all need quality water for survival. If we care about our future generations we must ensure that our water ways remain healthy and by that they must be able to flow and flush out any impurities.

The population must become more water wise and more accountable.

We are now at the point where the situation the River Murray is in, is nothing short of being classified as a National Environmental Disaster.



Is this the future of our river system?

Fresh water mussels.....dead.....turtles.....dead

Coorong 2/3 dead

Lake Albert and Lake Alexandrina dying.

This is what is happening right now.

The river next?

An Environmental National Disgrace.

This cancer will continue to spread further upstream if we continue to take water from our rivers without considering the consequences.

It is time that we stood up for our environment, for our rivers, for our future.

Again, Australia's River System Knows No State Borders.

