

Thankyou for the opportunity to make a submission on the productivity of the MDBP.

Firstly, I congratulate successive federal governments with special consideration to the former Water Minister Malcolm Turnbull, for the systematic destruction over many years of the Murray Darling Basin. The Irrigation System is on the brink of collapse, our economy is in reverse and we are losing a generation of farmers before their time.

Firstly, the original objectives of the water act 2007

- (a) to enable the Commonwealth, in conjunction with the Basin States, to manage the Basin water resources in the national interest; and

A) National interests have been ignored. The lower lakes of South Australia should be returned to an estuarine state to let mullocky breed, consistent with research dated back to 7000 years. The Drainage Scheme of the 1930's diverting water from the Coorong needs to be addressed urgently and realistic scale modelling needs to be carried out, which will show the Frequency of forest flooding has been grossly over estimated. Due to the Nature of Flood Flows as we Witnessed in 2011 when Laanecoorie spilled 180000 ML in one day less than .5 % of that water could ever totally flow through the entirety of the Loddon due to its constrictions at canary Island. By the time that water had met up with the Campaspe, Goulburn Murray And Murrumbidgee Flows and gently funnelled through to South Australia There wasn't enough Power to open the Murray mouth and keep it open. In a drought year it is insane that anyone believes water would have naturally flooded our flood ways in doing so the National interest has been completely Ignored

- (b) to give effect to relevant international agreements (to the extent to which those agreements are relevant to the use and management of the Basin water resources) and, in particular, to provide for special measures, in accordance with those agreements, to address the threats to the Basin water resources; and

B) is the only vague section that has been conformed to and that basically reads "let international rules dictate and override any national or state laws and in doing so kick the farmers off their land" which, is in clear disregard to Section 51 of the Australian constitution in which reads that international agreements can only be followed "subject to this Constitution".

- (c) in giving effect to those agreements, to promote the use and management of the Basin water resources in a way that optimises economic, social and environmental outcomes; and

C) there certainly aren't any optimisation of economic, social nor environmental outcomes. The Northern Victorian Economy is struggling local businesses are closing down Primary and Secondary and the GMID is on the brink of collapse as it is unviable for irrigators to access water. Our businesses are unsustainable and there is nothing we can grow to become viable, basically due to giving water a price. The damage being done to our rivers and Dryland forest environments is unforgivable.

- (d) without limiting paragraph (b) or (c):

- (i) to ensure the return to environmentally sustainable levels of extraction for water resources that are overallocated or overused; and

D) Irrigators had no issue with the allocation system in Torrumbarry Previous to this Legislation Our system worked now it is fractured and unsustainable. The Floodplains were natural Flood ways historically taking the majority of volume of natural large floods and are an important Part of the environment with plentiful habitat and wildlife.

- (ii) to protect, restore and provide for the ecological values and ecosystem services of the Murray-Darling Basin (taking into account, in particular, the impact that the taking of water

has on the watercourses, lakes, wetlands, ground water and water-dependent ecosystems that are part of the Basin water resources and on associated biodiversity); and

II) Putting water in some of these watercourses is detrimental as shown from past history where the trees have died from constant inundation

(iii) subject to subparagraphs (i) and (ii)—to maximise the net economic returns to the Australian community from the use and management of the Basin water resources; and

D) Continual flooding of a flood and famine river like the Murray-Darling rivers completely changes the biodiversity of the forests encouraging overgrowth of weeds, undergrowth and weak, unviable river red gums, kills box trees and changes the ecosystem and balance of nature.

(e) to improve water security for all uses of Basin water resources; and

E) We no longer have any water security and people are struggling to sleep at night not knowing if water will be available in the future. During dry periods the environment naturally doesn't require water.

(f) to ensure that the management of the Basin water resources takes into account the broader management of natural resources in the Murray-Darling Basin; and

(g) to achieve efficient and cost effective water management and administrative practices in relation to Basin water resources; and

g) Cost efficient water management- FAIL. The complexity of the system that has created an administrative nightmare managing water trade.

(h) to provide for the collection, collation, analysis and dissemination of information about:

(i) Australia's water resources; and

(ii) the use and management of water in Australia.

h) Communication mmm Tell the farmers what they want to hear and do what you want anyway. Historically the river dried up in drought periods. They ran when we had large rains which are not a common occurrence. 1906,1911,1916,1931,1956,1974, 1975,1983,1992,2011, 2016 possibly some minor occurrences in between but definitely not 7 out of every 10 years.

Obviously this hasn't been taken into account due to the NCCMA believing that the dryland box forest requires flooding 7 out of 10 years. After Turrumberry weir was built there was a period in 1924, 1925 where the forest had been inundated for over 12 months and the redgums were stressed and dying.

18 Septem

STATE FOREST DAMAGED

LOSS ALREADY £25,000

WHILE DEPARTMENTS DIFFER

COHUNA, Tuesday. — As a result of the winter overflow of the Murray River on to Gunbower Island, where an estimated area of 5,000 acres has been continually inundated, the destruction of valuable redgum timber in the lower portion of the State forest is increasing. The royalty on each of the larger trees would average about £5, and on the conservative estimate of one such tree to the acre damage amounting to £25,000 has already been done. In addition, the estimated royalties on sleepers cut from timber destroyed in the area would amount to from 30 to £2 an acre. This does not take into account the value of the timber itself or the loss of work to the 80 sleeper-cutters employed in the forest.

The trouble is caused by the lack of control of the flood and other waters that flow on to the island from the Murray and the Gunbower Creek. Several conferences of the heads of the State departments concerned have been held, but they have been fruitless, it is alleged, because the departments have been unable to apportion their responsibilities.

The Argus (Melbourne, Vic. : 1848-1954), Saturday

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GUNBOWER FOREST TIMBER

Damage by Flooding

COHUNA, Friday.—Much concern is felt by the State Forest authorities and by sleeper-cutters at the wholesale damage to red-gum trees in the Gunbower forest, due to excessive flooding. It is officially estimated that the growing timber on 4,000 acres of the lower forest, valued at £18,000, has been ruined as the result of excessive saturation, while other portions are seriously threatened. The timber on a 400-acre area of forest recently acquired by the Forests Commission to the west of the Gunbower Creek has also been killed by the same cause. This has been traced to the continual overflowing of the Gunbower Creek at the Koonook weir and floodings from the Murray River through the Deep Creek cutting near Leitchville.

As the result of an investigation by Mr. Hayden, of the Forests Department, and Mr. Kendall, of the Water Commission, it has been decided to block up the Deep Creek and erect banks on each side of the Gunbower Creek in the neighbourhood of Ounnearra.

National Library of Australia

Cohuna Historical archives information from the 1920's

Farmers' Weekly March 21st 1925.

Draining the Gunbower Forest

The Torrumbarry Weir is profoundly effecting the water distribution of this and adjacent districts indirectly as well as directly. One of its probably unanticipated effects has been to perpetually flood a large part of the middle portions of the Gunbower Island, which has been under water ever since last winter, and which still resembles a picturesque inland sea, covered with brilliant flaring marsh buttercups and sedges. Here and there a low ridge or bank shows above water, and these small and circumscribed spots are the prison house of rabbits and other vermin that have been driven there to escape drowning.

This soaking of the Island with water has a very beneficial effect upon the vigor and growth of the red gum, up to a point. In the opinion of experts, however, that point is being exceeded, and it is feared that the perpetual immersion of the base of these trees in water will result in the dying off of large numbers of them.

To obviate this trouble a scheme is under consideration for the more efficient dispersion of surplus water about the forest portion of the Island, and for its disposal as circumstances from time to time require.

To effect this it is proposed to cut a drain to connect the main body of Island waters with the Yarron and other adjacent creeks, and to carry it away in a channel in the direction of Koondrook, where the Forest stands on rather higher ground, and where, in consequence, it is in need of artificial watering.

This and cognate matters are likely to receive the particular attention of the Forestry Commission which is expected to visit the Colona district shortly.

Key points of the draft report

DRAFT FINDING 3.4 The size and speed of water purchases has had negative impacts on some regional communities. Recovering water through infrastructure modernisation has partially offset pressure for structural adjustment in some communities, but at a significant cost to taxpayers. However, higher water prices, water trade, and other ongoing pressures for change in the agriculture sector mean that some structural change is inevitable.

The size and speed of water purchases has had an enormous negative impact on the GMID. Water savings upgrading open channels to pumps has been grossly over estimated. Modernising in exchange for water share has basically taken water from irrigators that have been forced to sell on the open market, to reign in debt. Efficiency grants containing the forfeit of water at above market price in exchange for modernising, prompted re-entering the free market to purchase the equivalent water share forfeited, at a lower price. It has also created greed through insider trading in the Torrumbarry irrigation district, where there was targeted buying of farms on a Spur channel to obtain millions of dollars to redevelop. This was to involve removing all the Flood irrigation infrastructure and replacing with Pivot sprays pictured to be “sustainably farming”. The pivots are not adequate and could not deliver the water required during summer periods to maintain adequate moisture levels. This is a prime example of buyback and infrastructure upgrade money being wasted in the order of \$12Million and today it is abandoned unproductive ground. Flood irrigation in the GMID is far more suitable and when gravity fed is ZERO emission.



“consolidated farm upgraded with \$12M grants now unsustainable and unproductive”

DRAFT FINDING 5.2 Current progress in implementing efficiency measures provides little confidence that the enhanced environmental outcomes of the Basin Plan will be achieved by 2024 or on budget.

There has been no update to the modelling to estimate what environmental benefits can be realistically achieved, given proposed projects to ease or remove constraints are unlikely to achieve the anticipated flow rates at key sites or be fully operational by 2024. Basin Governments have not yet agreed on an efficiency measures work plan to recover 450 GL by 2024, including how major socioeconomic impacts will be addressed. Despite this, the Australian Government is rolling out a water recovery program Basin-wide, which risks recovering water in the northern Basin that may not be useful to achieving the enhanced environmental outcomes in the southern Basin. There is a material risk that recovering 450 GL could be significantly more expensive than anticipated. The benefits and costs of the program as a whole have not been assessed (and there is no requirement to do so).

As Noted previously the frequency that the Gunbower Island naturally flooded has been Grossly over estimated and the efficiency Measures proposed to pump water onto the high ground will Damage the Black box habitat and create an environmental Disaster. Similar to Gutterum and Benwell Forests. Spending Taxpayer dollars on measures to damage the environment is not in Australia’s interest.

DRAFT FINDING 7.1 Basin States have improved their formal processes for engaging Traditional Owners as part of Water Resource Plan (WRP) development. Given that so few WRPs have been submitted for accreditation to date, there is a risk that Basin States have left too little time before July 2019: to complete effective engagement with Traditional Owners to have regard to the views of Traditional Owners in preparing their WRPs for MLDRIN and NBAN to develop their advice about whether the WRP requirements for Indigenous values and uses have been met. This concern is greatest for New South Wales.

The Traditional owners of Gunbower Island are perplexed at the situation and can't understand why the bush is being Flooded so often and at the wrong time of year. To this date they still remain unconsulted. They are deeply concerned about the degradation the plan is causing to the river and the Hypoxic black water events that are killing their fish and forcing the crays out of the water.

DRAFT FINDING 10.1 Some trade restrictions that were inconsistent with the Basin Plan trading rules have been removed. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) has raised 16 instances of potential non-compliance with the trading rules with Basin States. Ten of these matters remain unresolved and the MDBA has not been clear with Basin States about the steps to resolve these in a timely way

Not enough Trade restriction is in place to protect the viability of the existing infrastructure that has been in place for a Century. The Matter needs to be Resolved to keep water in the districts that it was originally attached. Removal of water by both environmental purchase and expanding the irrigated area has doubled the negative effect. The GMID in reality needs to shrink to accommodate rendering connections project upgrades a complete waste of money. Evaporation is constant year after Year at 1500mm therefore the shortfall with 300mm rain average is 1200mm or 12ML/Ha which indicates the removal of water from a district must shrink the available area to be irrigatable. Inevitably it is the end of the line as we will lose the next generation of farmers as they are unable to buy land in the GMID and make a living due to the reckless separation of water from the land which no person in the community can understand the logic of. The economic production of food per Ha in the GMID will drop and possibly be similar to the Wimmera Mallee in the near future

DRAFT FINDING 10.3 Growth of trade has increased demands on delivery capacity and put pressure on delivery constraints in some parts of the Basin. A range of community members are concerned about the effects on third parties and the environment. Basin States and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority are aware of this strategic policy issue, but the process to resolve it is unclear.

Due to the Lax trade restriction we have a serious situation where, in a lean year of allocation say 40%HRWS there is not enough water in the consumptive pool to irrigate all the permanent Horticultural Plantings alone in these years, some using 18ML/ha. It has also created a situation due to increased planting downstream of Barmah Choke, that it is impossible to get water to these irrigators in a normal year. The erosion being caused in both Barmah Choke and the Goulburn River has been Created by the trade Relaxation and the generational Irrigators are struggling to be supplied. It is a complete Failure of the Murray Darling Basin Plan, add to that the further the water is run down the river the grater the losses incurred. There is obvious requirement to cap the amount of water passing through constraints and more emphasis for it to be used nearer the source where through natural rainfall patterns would contain vast amounts of floodwaters anyway.

In conclusion the original objectives have been ignored, the economy and social fabric of our communities are being destroyed and the Environmental outcomes aren't being met and are impossible to achieve. The Wentworth Group of concerned scientists is also unhappy as the plan has failed to achieve anything positive to date, with millions of taxpayer dollars wasted. It is not beyond the realms of possibility that the annual billion dollar (wholesale milk) Dairy industry will cease to exist in the next five years in the GMID and the flow on effect of job losses throughout will be devastating. Modelling of river flows needs to be transparent and consistent with what occurred naturally and we must not ignore the mistakes from history. It is inevitable that water will be required to be reattached to land at some point in time if Australia is to have sustainable agriculture into the future and economic prosperity. The greed which has placed all of our eggs in the one basket is economically reckless due to the nature of commodities, as when in short supply they attract high prices, when the market floods they hit rock bottom. Balance needs to be achieved throughout the MDB if we are to self-sustain our population in times of conflict, adverse weather or disease outbreak. We also need to be careful with corporate farming due to them only in it to make a profit, we see regularly where the investors pull their funding if the commodity goes bad and the venture is written off while land is left to ruin. Trade should be allowable only in set irrigation districts. Failure to act on this will see the destruction of the GMID, due to it being run at too low a capacity to be viable. Alarm bells should be resonating when those farmers that own water choose to sell rather than use it for agriculture, which ultimately takes money out of our local economy and overall gives less return to Australia's economy. The choice to sell water off like this is a devastating result of the Water ACT and with water right (water share) now being held by Foreign countries, governments and wealthy non-irrigators, we are being held to ransom due to water being essential for our operation. This has created a false economy and taken the wealth away from primary production stifling our progress to the point where we are losing productivity, due to requiring to cut corners or lay off staff and work ourselves excessive hours 100+ per week.

It is also clear that the water act 2007 is in clear breach of the rights of the states and the people of that state.

SEC 100

Nor abridge right to use water

The Commonwealth shall not, by any law or regulation of trade or commerce, abridge the right of a State or of the residents therein to the reasonable use of the waters of rivers for conservation or irrigation.

It's not too late to do the right thing, every state is responsible for fixing this mess Especially South Australia. Recognising the mistakes made at the lower lakes and Coorong and returning them to their historically natural state is a priority of national interest. The RAMSAR listing of the lakes needs to be representative of their historical form. Allowing 5000ML/day through to evaporate in the lower lakes of South Australia is like losing 5000 tonnes of rice out of the Riverina per day, or 4ML of milk from the GMID per day. This is a huge economic loss, for no gain, in an Estuary that is being forced into a fresh water lake. As seen in the 2011 floods the huge amount of water that passed through did not achieve what is falsely being aimed for, while the Murray and Murrumbidgee were at capacity. The environment wasn't fresh it was open to the sea. All this waste is occurring during one of Australia's worst droughts. Totally Unnatural.