

Committee Secretary

Mrs Joan Pickersgill

Senate Standing Committee on Rural Affairs & Transport

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Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

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Dear Senator Heffernan,

Since the release of MDBA plan many questions have been asked but no real answers given. We now have the supply dams overflowing, the rivers in flood, & still water buy backs are still continuing. Why?. The money being spent on this could be better spent on infrastructure improvement. We did seek a moratorium on buy back until after the enquiries had concluded but still they go on.

The farmers in the MIA have been implementing changes to farming practices to create large water savings on their water usage, but despite this, they are being asked to accept further reductions to supply of water. This is demoralizing & having great affects on their mental health. Already many have seen it as hopeless, & have committed suicide. When the MDBA plan was presented without any consultation with those who would be most effected, our questions went unanswered, or with rhetoric that meant nothing or was not related to the questions asked.

Banks are foreclosing on properties, of farmers who have struggled through the drought, to now face less water making them unviable. There is no where for these people to get jobs, as if the plan is implemented in its present form, many will find it hopeless to continue, then businesses will be affected, they will not employ, farm hands will be gone, less people, less services, affecting schools, hospitals, & Drs. There are little enough of these services now, & for Phycology services it is Wagga, or Albury. The plan has given a figure of 800 job losses, but the figure is conservative at 8,000.

Rice growers are using quicker growing varieties of rice, using about half the water the old varieties did. No recognition has been given to this. This year with the cyclones overseas the Asian rice crops have been devastated, & MIA crops will be needed to help feed these people.

In areas like the Hunter & Nth –west NSW farming land is being threatened by mining and its waste contaminating the water ways. Irrigation areas will be more essential than ever to produce the food needed for Australia & overseas.

Chinese & American interests are buying up land & water rights yet our own farmers are being denied the essential water. These people are not paying Australian taxes, and export there produce direct to there home base, thus reducing trade with Australia. In their own countries they are given subsidies, that are denied our own producers.

Farmers are conservationists & care about the health of the river, but know the same result could be achieved with less water than what the MDBA suggests. It would be beneficial if these bodies, & the Irrigators could sit together & plan out a solution. Prior to irrigation this area was a desert with only snakes & lizards, now it supports 75 varieties of bird life as well as, fish, frogs, tortoises, kangaroos & many more species. Take the water & all these are at risk.

We need our irrigation areas & this plan if implemented as it has been presented, will devastate the region with more destruction of livelihoods as well as the local eco system.

The Darling River was severely affected by the damming of its source in Queensland, which had a flow on the waters of South Australia. This was where the problem was not the water irrigators were using. Remembering that in the drought years this supply was denied even though payment was still required. There was water stored in locks at Balranald that could have been released for the river. More water storages are required throughout Australia urgently. Even in the deserts of Iran ,Dams are being built. Why not here?

The theory seems to be we can allow overseas interests to buy up all our industries, products etc, & we will end up a third world nation as was forecast some years ago. Food produced overseas has no health checks done & is produced under methods that Australian producers are not allowed to use. The world will require more food in the next 12 months than has been produced since time began. We need to keep our irrigation areas viable. Please see that the MDBA is not implemented in its present form. We can have a healthy river & a Healthy MIA & CIA.

*Yours sincerely*