



The Goulburn Valley Environment Group Inc.
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Inquiry into the Water Amendment (Purchase Limit Repeal) Bill 2019

The Goulburn Valley Environment Group (GVEG) strongly supports the Water Amendment (Purchase Limit Repeal) Bill 2019 to amend the Water Act 2007(the Act) to repeal the statutory limit of 1,500GL on Commonwealth purchases of surface water across the Murray-Darling Basin.

The 2016 limit on buyback was never part of the original Murray-Darling Basin Plan. Recent decisions and incidents across the Basin including the findings of the Productivity Commission, the SA Royal Commission and both the Government and Opposition's scientific panels reports on fish deaths in the Lower Darling all signal the need for the implementation of the Basin Plan as agreed and as intended. This will involve further reductions to consumptive use across the Basin.

Recent Southern Basin amendments to the socio economic criteria by Minco at the demand of NSW, Victoria and irrigators have all but ruled out the recovery of water for the environment from on farm efficiency programs.

These programs were, with the introduction of the 1500GL Cap, the only realistic alternative means of water recovery from consumptive use.

These programs were well received in many irrigation regions and oversubscribed as a way of upgrading on-farm infrastructure to mitigate climate change impacts and varying water security in the future.

The direct purchase of water licences from willing sellers has always been the most efficient use of public funds to restore water for river and wetland health.

Public confidence in the spending of the \$13b investment of public funds to achieve the best outcome for the Murray-Darling Basin long term health is critical.

The successful implementation of the Basin Plan will require maximum flexibility to achieve the most equitable and preferred water recovery outcomes.

This Bill increases that flexibility and should be supported.

Yours sincerely,

John Pettigrew
GVEG President.

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