

Murray Darling Basin Authority
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Guide to the Proposed Basin Plan – Volume 1

My Son and I operate a 550 cow dairy farm in the Kiewa Valley in a share farming arrangement. We have a 551 mega litre water entitlement which has been a major factor that has enabled us to get through the past 10 years of reduced rainfall, enabling us to keep our entire workforce, maintain production and keep up to date with respect to our accounts.

After 45 years of farming in the Kiewa Valley, I find it hard to fathom, that the MDBA would propose such a plan to disrupt agriculture in our area and beyond. There is no equity in your proposal when you ask our catchment to give up between 40-60% of its irrigation water when our valley already provides greater than 96% of its flows to the environment. It disturbs me to hear that the environmental movement wants environmental flows at times when if there were no storage dams, there would be no flows at all; it is the same people who lobby for no more dams to be built. I have major concerns over the content within the **Guide to the proposed plan – Volume 1**.

- ❖ The Guide acknowledges the high flows from the Kiewa River system; however it does not address the massive socio-economic impact of the proposed Sustainable Diversion Limits (SDLs). Why does the Guide not recognize the social and economic impact on our region? The environment needs to be seen as one of the future needs of the Basin, not the first and foremost
- ❖ There would be a catastrophic impact on the region through the proposals, as the only area that reductions could take place would be by a reduction in surface water diversions only (40-60 %).
- ❖ There needs to be a much larger value placed on the 38% of total flows that our region provides to the MDB, if this were to be recognized, then you would see that instead of reducing our entitlements, it would be more prudent to increase irrigation development to utilise the efficiencies that come with irrigation in high rainfall areas. These efficiencies include a lower per hectare water usage than downstream, and being able to use the water where it falls, dramatically reducing evaporation and seepage losses that occur when water transfers between and along catchments.

- ❖ Licensed irrigation on the Kiewa system is an incredibly small amount in relation to the amount of water provided to the environment.
- ❖ Any irrigation water not used in the Kiewa system is passed on to the environment, as there is no storage available for irrigation carryover.
- ❖ New development in the Valley will stop, under any of the 3 proposed scenarios in The Guide.
- ❖ When a reduction of 40% is being targeted in the Kiewa system, there is a very real concern about a “voluntary” buy back. How will water be recovered if there are not enough “willing” sellers?
- ❖ Investment in irrigation infrastructure has to be the preferred option to provide water to the environment.
- ❖ The water security statement made within the Guide cannot be accepted and are contradictory to the SDL recommendations when applied to our regions.
- ❖ People in the Kiewa valley are very environmentally aware; the good quality of the water in the Kiewa River is the result of a large outlay of money and effort by farm families and individuals.
- ❖ The Kiewa valley community understands the importance of sustainability in all the water systems but cannot understand how environment systems along the whole Murray System do not have to manage and measure water use efficiencies in the same way farmers and communities are expected to. There needs to be rules that govern and foster a more efficient use of the water that is allocated to the environment, and the environment must pay its way with respect to infrastructure costs. The authority must take early action to scope a program of works and measures to achieve innovative solutions to reduce the volume of water required to achieve environmental benefits/outcomes.
- ❖ Buying or obtaining entitlements will not produce any more water in times of drought, therefore attempting to remove irrigators of large portions of their entitlements would only serve to have a massive negative effect on the 40 % of Australian agricultural production that is derived from within the MDB.
- ❖ It appears that the environment is the highest or only priority within the guide. The **quantity** of flows through the Murray Mouth shouldn't govern the whole system; the “environment” should be a much more embracing term.
- ❖ The Guide concentrates more on end flow outcomes for the Murray Darling Basin (MDB) without consideration for what the catchments are already providing to the overall system.

Yours faithfully

David Reid