

**From:**  
**To:** [Committee, MDBP \(SEN\)](#)  
**Subject:** Lower Lakes and the Coorong .  
**Date:** Monday, 7 September 2015 9:18:04 AM

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Senators and others,

One of the assumptions that the MDBA plan is based on is incorrect. The notion that the lower lakes and the Coorong were fed predominately ,by water from NSW,VIC and Qld is wrong.

Before the intrusion of the vast SE of SA drainage scheme commenced in 1863 by Goyder et al, approximately 4,000,000 megalitres flowed from aquifers that extend from South West Victoria to the Grampians and the entire SE of SA. into the lower lakes and the Coorong.

Along the land edge of the Coorong there are thousands of tufas. Over thousands of years these tufas were formed when many millions of megalitres of fresh water seeped through the limestone aquifers, into the Coorong and the lower lakes. The tufas are a concentric carbonate lamination at the edge of the Coorong and lakes and were formed when the water flowed through them.

This catchment area is about half the size of Tasmania. The rainfall is 700mm+ with a period of water in excess of evaporation runoff, continuing for 5 months per year. This water made the area unproductive for the 5 month period as it would flood or be a swamp. The amount of fresh water that was drained from the area would have exceeded 4,000,000 megalitres through the 1,875 kilometres of connected drains to the ocean.

With the water table lowered, a range of pastures including the deep rooted Lucerne, crops and forestry, are grown on this vast area. With this growth and transpiration the water table is kept at a manageable level. This production exceeds \$3billion annually and is a major contributor to South Australia's wealth.

The MDBA has made no reference to the draining of this huge amount of water away from the lower lakes and the Coorong. South Australia has also remained silent on this issue. The word "tufa does not appear anywhere in the MDBA plan!

At all times in a least the last 8 years, irrigators from the Murray river system have been blamed for the damage to the lower lakes and the Coorong by over extraction of irrigation water.

We now know that this is incorrect.

The damage done to irrigation communities is huge. The loss of production in NSW,VIC,SA and Qld by diverting 3000 ggalitres to South Australia to try to fix an ecological disaster caused by SA and their drainage scheme, is in excess of \$5 billion annually, in on farm production.

The multiplier effect of this production maybe as high as \$15 billion ,when processed and exported or sold in Australia.

The on farm and regional increase in employment could exceed 5000 jobs. The multiplier effect of this increase in production may well create 10,000 jobs in cities.

The CPI has a much greater chance of staying lower if food is plentiful. This is in the public interest.

The MDBA plan is not in the public interest. The current plan is very destructive to

agriculture. Australia's agricultural industries must have the backup of irrigated agriculture to manage drought, particularly livestock and permanent plantings.

Water has to be kept in dams in the mountains of NSW and Vic to do that , because there it is cold ,the water is deep and evaporation is very low.

The lower lakes and Coorong must be managed by South Australia, without irrigation water from the Murray river. It clearly was before the drains were installed .The barrages need removing and a new plan drawn up to get water that is being diverted to the ocean ,returned to the lakes. The MDBA should first admit its mistakes and then do something about it .If the MDBA struggles with this concept it should be disbanded and water returned to its state of origin.

This submission was sent from  
Graeme Pyle

Chairman of the Berriquin Irrigators Council ,which comprises 800 irrigators between Berrigan and Deniliquin on the Murray Irrigation system