



Submission by Wendy Buck Facilitator; Murray Irrigators Farming Support Group,

To the SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS

Inquiry into the Water Amendment (Water for the Environment Special Account)
Bill 2012

Thank you for the opportunity to bring the collective thoughts of our irrigator members here in the Murray Valley to your attention on the subject of The Murray-Darling Basin Authority's proposed basin plan.

To be quite frank they are over it!

Our farmers have rallied in the streets, attended forums, written submissions and attended parliamentary inquiries on the subject of the proposed Murray Darling Basin Plan.

To be quite frank you know what they think!

Our irrigator members want to look forward to get on with their lives and prepare to deal with whatever hand the Murray Darling Basin Authority is going to deal them.

The Murray Darling Basin Authority is banking on our farmers to not only survive the basin plan with the same courage and determination they endure drought and flooding rains they will survive the basin plan and thrive because they are Australian farmers.

So moving forward with resolve our farmers await the inevitable, and prepare for progress which is out of their control.

Mentally they have accepted change is coming and acknowledge the Murray-Darling Basin has not been managed with a basin-wide plan.

Farmers acknowledge the need to restore the health of our rivers; they support strong regional communities and consider it paramount to ensure sustainable food production while returning water to environmental flows.

Farmers applaud the proposed plan which includes an adjustment mechanism which will allow the SDL to move up if environmental outcomes can be delivered with less

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water and move down when additional water is acquired in a way which is not detrimental to rural communities.

Farmers applaud the provision of funding to projects that improve environmental outcomes over and above that in the 2,750-gigalitre benchmark.

Farmers applaud the further funding of projects such as on-farm infrastructure required to acquire up to an additional 450 gigalitres of water beyond the benchmark in the plan.

Farmers applaud that additional water beyond the benchmark should only be acquired through methods that deliver additional water for the environment without negative social and economic consequences to our regional and rural communities.

Farmers acknowledge the ongoing benefits of modernising on-farm irrigation infrastructure and support the government agreement with this approach and the bill being framed in these terms.

Farmers acknowledge that amending the Water Act 2007 will provide for a secure funding stream that will make provision for an additional 450 gigalitres of water to be recovered.

Farmers applaud this government's initiative through the Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure program, to recover water for the environment through upgrading on-farm infrastructure programs.

Farmers continue to support the Water Technology Cluster's Irrigation Expo's in Echuca and Shepparton which significantly improve the method of delivering a service to the farming community, irrigation manufacturers, stakeholders in modernisation upgrades in Northern Victoria and the Governments On Farm Irrigation Efficiency Program.

Irrigators endeavour to improve their patterns of water consumption and environmental behaviour by attending the WTC Expo's who encourage state of the art technology to modernise on farm irrigation infrastructure while returning water to the environment to achieve sustainable irrigated agriculture with environmental benefits and outcomes.



Farmers support the full involvement of the Victorian Government in the development of the projects that would underpin sustainable diversion limit adjustments.

Farmers are banking on this parliament not fail the basin communities and that the system will return to health and the environment and the communities which are nourished by these mighty rivers will have a strong and resilient future.

As the farming support group facilitator I intend to lobby the government to form a model or pilot project to bring together environmental groups such as the Goulburn Valley Environmental Group the Victorian Farmers Federation the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management authority the Department of Primary Industries and other interested group's to form a new peak body which embraces sustainable food production, irrigation and the environment.

I have had initial consultation with some of these groups which has been extremely encouraging, this vision I have will deliver projects which will enhance the delivery of not only water for irrigation but environmental flows as well.

Two years ago I suggested uniting irrigation and the environment in the Murray Darling Basin when I applied for the Fairley Leadership program.

Then the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority formed the Sustainable Irrigation Program Advisory group to which I was appointed as a community representative, I have also been appointed to the GBCMA Farm and Environment working group.

My vision for uniting irrigation and the environment is becoming a reality and with the government's support for a pilot program to flesh out this vision the new peak body could deliver irrigation and environmental programs similar to the Water Technology Cluster Expo's model.

Engaging all of the stakeholders through hands on workshops, expos and collaborative projects to support, promote and deliver on this vision of sustainable irrigation with positive environmental benefits and outcomes supporting the Murray Darling Basin Authorities Basin Plan.