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To: [Committee, MDBP \(SEN\)](#)
Subject: Senate Select Committee On The Murray Darling Basin Plan
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SENATE INQUIRY MURRAY DARLING BASIN PLAN & CONSTRAINTS

August 2015 Upper Goulburn River Catchment

David Mold email

Dear Senators,

I would like to thank you for taking on this task. I hope I can give you some insight into the land holders on THE UPPER GOULBURN CATCHMENT, and our concerns with MDBA and the current data we are getting from them.

I have been on our property since March 1959. I have seen many things change over the years on these river flats. I often wondered, how the early settlers would have dealt with the challenges they must have faced in those early times.

What I wish to pass on is based on the information the MDBA has given us at this point in time.

As we have nothing real positive, the whole thing has been rushed and they appear to have a plan but, it may well be different after they study all the information and data, from those on the Upper Goulburn have given them this last week. They now understand the reasons we have not been happy, with the Constraints data in their first print.

Our property is half river flat and half hill country, which makes a good mix. Inundation on our **RIVER Flats** is not what we want, nor are we prepared to accept. Unable to access our river flats is not viable, and the cost of agisting cows & calves is very expensive. It also takes away our means of cutting silage, and hay both of which are produced on our river flats. Our hill country is too steep and stony to harvest on, beside we would need all that to run as much of our livestock on under those conditions. Our property is half river flats, and half hill country that means half our income gone, with very high running costs.

Our next problem is flood damage resulting in flattened fences, rubbish, logs, weeds, likely dead pasture. This then becomes a real issue, likely soil compaction from the weight of the water lying so long, and no oxygen available to the soil. There is a high cost factor and a very long time line before fences, and pasture are established again; not to mention the months of man hours to do all this work. With little or no income, to feed your livestock so as to keep your breeders and blood lines. Then you have a big weed problem when things do start to grow, with high cost to eradicate. With the proposed flows of flooding 6 years out of 10, who would want to farm under those conditions? It just would **not** be viable. The proposed flows are suggested for the spring season, no possible hope of cutting silage or hay. It is most likely we would not get enough warning of one of the events in time to even graze our flat before flooding. Currently the Goulburn River, has a State Government regulation, that Eildon Weir can only release a maximum 9500 mg/L. This is because from Molesworth to Homewood, the channel can only carry that amount before flooding. The Goulburn Valley Highway and Molesworth Township become flooded above that level. This does not allow for the water that can be coming into the Goulburn River from tributaries below Eildon or above Molesworth. The Parish of KILLINGWORTH has river flat which is like Molesworth water starts to run on to farm land at 9500 Mg/L per day.

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The hill country above our river flat would have a catchment at least 500 hectares, which eventually drains on to our river flats. Our drainage system on the hills meet a twin set of culvert pipes about 1 metre diameter each (underneath Killingworth Road which divides our property) on to our river flat. Water then travels 1 kilometre through our drain system on a low

gradient into the Goulburn River. The reason we are unable to manage more than 9500 mg/L the outlet into the river has to be low enough for the drain to flow into the river. However when we get flooding of low amounts it comes over bank in the 3 properties upstream of us, and follows and fills all the low area as it spreads. The river flat on Killingworth has the lowest area below the road, or foot of the hills generally. This cuts off access very quickly to the river flats, and it often makes it longer before you can get access again. So it depends on how long the high release runs for as to how quick the water recedes. Once it has drained you have to wait some time for it to dry out, before you can carry out any work or put stock back on even if you have to feed them. So, this is a delicate balance in trying to time this right, and allowing the soil/grass to recover, whilst needing to graze livestock.

Then we get environmental damage, river banks so wet, big red gums fall in the river or on the easement. Then you get bank erosion and slumping, as well as dam CARP get into our lagoons, and muddy them up, not good stock water.

This inundation 6 in every 10 years will reduce the land value, none of which any of us want.

High Goulburn River flows of prolonged duration will cause “backing up” of water in the tributaries near the confluence with the Goulburn.

Bureau of Meteorology flood level classification is not relevant to areas distant from flood gauges. The flood levels of minor, moderate or major are pertinent specifically at the gauge area only.

High Goulburn River flows of prolonged duration will not allow tributary flows to drain or fall quickly as they normally would do.

The time frame for the MDBA Plan is too short to allow essential data to be collected and collated. For example no property by property assessment to take place in Phase 2 as it was stated would happen.

No socio-economic study or cost/benefit has taken place on the impact of flooding in the Upper **Goulburn Catchment.**

50% of the Yea Murrindindi catchment is UN gauged. Therefore how can there be any solid stream flow or rainfall data available on which to base a decision regarding proposed environmental releases out of Eildon.

The proposal to release large environmental flows out of Eildon on top of strong or high tributary flows is extremely dangerous as the tributaries flows are very unpredictable, fast flowing and rise vary rapidly. Subsequent high flows are too unpredictable to accurately forecast, therefore major flooding could result. The current operating mode for Eildon Weir is that as soon as there are high tributary flows, releases from Eildon are cut back to a minimum 150ML/day in order to mitigate downstream flooding.

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They wish to acquire easements over property that will be intentionally flooded. They have called this Mitigation. Mitigation means to ease, alleviate, and lessen the pain or impact. An easement is merely a line on your title which gives them the right to use your land for intentionally sending flood waters over it-that is NOT MITIGATION. Instead it is mitigation for Goulburn Murray Water and the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Association who normally are legally liable and responsible for damages caused by flooding.

Compensation as a one-off payment will be made. Unacceptable as it has not been extrapolated into the future for ongoing costs and for a lifetime of improvement works already done.

Psychological stress – having the threat of a flood hanging over you is emotionally draining. A flood is a traumatic event and will have psychological implications on those being flooded – it is already driving us mad! Risk – unintended consequences of the flood being greater than planned (ie, a misread on the projected rainfall leading to greater tributary flows).

Equity argument – why should we be collateral damage (paying the financial and emotional price) for perceived benefits further down the catchment. MDBA can have their water but not at the price of flooding freehold property in our REGION.

Impact of high and low flooding, on our property and others, are that all the lagoons and low areas will retain that water. It will never get back into the river it will soak into the soil and evaporate. You put that over all the land, on the Goulburn River catchment from Molesworth to Homewood you will have lost a very large amount of Mega litres. Even if some of the lagoons are half full. So that has to be made aware off as it is now land locked.

I feel the Government is not looking far enough to the future. Water for human consumption will be shorter than the Governments planning vision. Victoria alone will need the water that Eildon Weir can store, before 2050 if population numbers grow at the current rate. This Nation will not feed itself on Australian food. Because we are not managing our water priorities, or making sure we have our good agricultural land; being used to produce food and fibre, and stop turning it into housing estates. If you look around our country towns, 2 things are happening: 1) a lot of our future farmers are going to the big cities, for work or careers. 2) Agriculture is getting such a beating with the big stick, with banks making it tough to get finance, more and more Government regulations, documentation etc. At Federal, State, and Local levels, that our future farmers need to live and work with. You can't scratch yourself now days without a permit or some documentation. They see the average farming Mum & Dad work long hours with not much time for play. And say why would you want that life? Can you blame them?

We do have some of the next generation, who want stay on the land. We have some in the Murrindindi Shire. I know of 3 couples, one of which run our property, and would love to expand. However, with this MDBA proposal it has made 2 of the couples very nervous, and why wouldn't it. So I ask you take that on board also when you look at the long term big picture of where this is all going.

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Some events with flood water, February 1973 big event, Killingworth Rd is 4 metres higher than our river flat. The two rows of culvert pipes under the road are 1 metre diameter, unable to carry the volume of water. It was running 600 millimetres deep over the road; the road is 4 metres higher than the paddock above the culvert, which the water was coming from.

Flood 1993 the highest flood I have seen on the Goulburn River, the energy from water going under our bridge at the lagoon before the river was powerful, damaging the bed log base. When it travelled in and back out, washed a lot of material, from the bridge bed logs. This reduced the flow rate now, another flood of that magnitude or more will wipe it out. This will mean a big culvert with end walls. With a very large cost to us, another reason we don't want a big flood. The state of the bridge is fine when is draining out, but cannot handle water when it comes in now.

David Mold