

Select Committee
on the
Multi-Jurisdictional Management and Execution of the
Murray Darling Basin Plan

Submitted by

WATER COMMUNITIES S.A.

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February 2020.

SUMMARY

WATER COMMUNITIES S.A. is a new community group brought together to affiliate all representative groups in Sth Aust that are aligned to the River Murray. South Aust requires a single strong representation to present the States concerns and put forward solutions to ensure a sustainable, healthy River Murray.

The Murray Darling Basin is one of the most important National Assets Australia has. This area, covering over a 1 billion square kilometres and four states, carries our most precious resource, water.

There are several issues that require urgent attention to resolve the ongoing degeneration and degradation of the whole system.

With strong independent management, without the political persuasions or single-minded agendas there can be benefits for every consumptive user, which includes the environment.

Our focus is for a sustainable healthy River Murray in South Australia, and if there is a healthy bottom end to a river, usually the top end, including tributaries are also healthy.

Priority issues are

- The Murray Darling Basin to be recognised as a National Asset
- The Murray Darling Basin to be managed by a totally independent Board
- A moratorium on all new developments / extractions to be implemented immediately
- No extractions to be allowed without Accredited and Certified metering systems in place.
- Investigation with solutions regarding evaporation losses in South Australia
- All future water purchases to be for a currently licensed extractor with an allocation.

We have kept our submission as brief as possible and to the point.

Our comments can be discussed in further detail at your convenience.

Adequacy of information

The importance of accurate and current information cannot be underestimated. There is a severe lack of metering, recording and monitoring across the MDB System. With available technology there is no financial or practical reason why this cannot be implemented.

Accurate measurement of all extractions, inflows and storages will ensure the optimum management of the system is achievable.

All data should be live and accessible, to and through, the National Management Authority.

This management tool should be open and transparent with precise recording of water ownership and volumes.

All Water Trading should be thru this National Management Authority, as the current trading system lacks regulation and control. Water trading needs to be limited within regions because of the limitations within the River Murray System.

Complexity of current Basin Plan governance arrangements

The Murray Darling Basin Plan, if interpreted in the manner it was intended requires only minor changes and modernising.

The MDB Plan has been written in a complex, bureaucratic manner, allowing for variable interpretations to suit the agenda of the reader. Simplification of the Plan during the modernisation process can minimise misinterpretation.

Environmental watering

The MDBA has no true indication as to the quantity of water used for environmental flows or purposes.

The methodology of where, when and how often is not true to normal environmental patterns. The science or data used is obviously flawed, based on the continual contradictions of information available for a specific occurrence.

The environment plays the most important part of a healthy river system. Because of the man-made variations to the Murray Darling System its environmental management will have to change to ensure a healthy ecosystem.

Current methods of filling flood plains and back waters and allowing to evaporate off is doing nothing more than creating the environmental poison, SALT. Water must flush thru these areas to ensure a more natural high flow situation.

The management of the Lower Lakes in Sth. Aust. is based on agenda driven or political persuasion science.

Using RAMSAR as a reason for not changing the management is falsifying the meaning of the agreement. An estuarine environment would be a better fit for RAMSAR than the current unsustainable situation

The Lower lakes are no longer able to maintain the <1,000 EC Unit requirement.

Potential for more regular exposure of Acid Sulphate Soils.

It is evaporating equivalent to two thirds of South Australia's water entitlement.

The lakes are a breeding ground for the pest, European Carp, eating the native fish, destroying the riverbed grasses and disturbing the lakes/river bottom making it unsuitable for native fish habitat.,

Weir Zero does not shut the Lakes off from the River. A flow is required for river health.

The Barrages stay in place and modernised.

Infrastructure for supply of reliable fresh water to be installed to all areas with a demand around the lake

The evaporative savings can be better utilized for environmental management in the river mainstream.

The evaporative savings will be held in trust for Sth. Aust. community and population growth consumptive use and reserve for drought situations.

The Sth. Aust. water entitlement will not change with these savings. Is to be held in trust and can be shared within the basin for critical human needs.

Water Resource Plans

These need to be considered under the single National Independent Management Authority.

MRP's need to be simplified, uniform and modernized with the MRDB Review.

Compliance arrangements

Compliance requirements are a mixture of four States with a variety of regulations that have various interpretations causing confusion and frustration with the consumptive user.

Needs to be consistent, and uniform across the MDB

Compliance needs to be strictly enforced and policed. We have all kinds of inspectorial organisations for every other type of resource or industry but negligible for this National Asset.