

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committees
Parliament House, Canberra

I am writing to put my support for the Water Act 2007.

Too much water over previous decades has been allocated and extracted from the Murray Darling. The Basin has lost the majority (80-90%) of its floodplain wetlands and its waterbirds, native fish and wetland forests. We have to take serious action immediately to save this system and its flora and fauna.

If we need to save water it is important to price water as a valuable commodity. Many farmers already know the value of water and struggle to rationalise their use of it but some don't. And many people in cities frequently overuse the supply because all they have to do is turn on the tap and let it flow. If they had to cart it from a well, they would use it sparingly but we don't and none of us want to return to that style of living. We do need to stop using sprinklers, take short showers and avoid frequent use of appliances that use great volumes of water. People in cities will use water sparingly when it costs them dearly. Food crops need water but Australia's dry continent is not suited to rice and cotton crops. Unfortunately we need to restrict these crops to dry land farming.

Yes the Water Act 2007 is demanding but it has the right balance. Our first priority must be healthy river systems. That brings about a healthy community. Next we must keep mining apart from food producing areas in order to protect our aquifers. We need some allocations of water to produce food however it can't be at the expense of the Murray Darling Basin.

The Water Act 2007 is correct in making water allocation decisions (sustainable water extraction levels) based on the best available science.

My vote is to maintain the Water Act 2007. Do not weaken or amend it. We can't afford to lose the Murray Darling.

Sincerely

Kate McLaren