

SUBMISSION TO THE MURRAY-DARLING BASIN AUTHORITY
11th December 2010
GPO box 3001 CANBERRA ACT 2601.

From Bob Culhane,
14 years as a Bourke Shire Councillor. many many years as president of
the Bourke Chamber of Commerce. Clothing Retailer in Bourke and
Brewarrina.

I am writing this submission to impress on your committee, looking
into reviewing the water allocations to irrigators in the Murray Darling,
the fact that The Bourke area has already had too much reduction
WITHOUT ANY CONSIDERATION FOR THE VIABILITY OF THE
LOCAL FARMERS NOR FOR THE ECONOMIC AFFECTS THESE
CUTS HAVE HAD ON THE BUSINESSES AND THE WORKING
PEOPLE OF BOURKE.

IT HAS BEEN A DISASTER FOR OUR TOWN.

Bourke has been reliant on the jobs provided by the grazing industry
and primarily the irrigation industries for many years now and the
unfair 67% reduction in allocations and the unconsidered purchase of
Toorale station (reverting it to wild life) has had a catastrophic affect on
our farmers, businesses, and jobs for our workers.

The irrigators--- have had the rug pulled out from under them as their
equity in their farms diminished with their allocation reductions. Of
the 5 major irrigation employers 2 have been bankrupted, 1 has been
severely restricted by their bank, to the point of employing very few
people, and the last 2 have been forced to reduce their farming activities
also. All of this has dramatically reduced the need for employment and
services.

The Town---has had a reduction of at least 1000 people from the base
of 3700 before the reduction of allocations. Most of the people who
have gone were the employees of the irrigators and earning the good
wages, leaving a large percentage of the remaining population on

unemployment benefits and making less of a contribution to the economy than those workers who have left town to find work elsewhere.

Businesses--- several have gone broke as they were owed lots of money.(their customers were no longer able to pay them)
The rest of the businesses are suffering a large decline in their turnover making it very difficult to keep staff employed and pay their own bills. The businesses in town now also have to face the fact that the equity in their businesses they had prior to the 67% reduction has diminished also.

Toorale---- Buyback of licences does not do anything towards the economic survival of the businesses who have been providing the services to the irrigators, and their employees. The buyback has resulted in a total cancellation of employment and services required to keep an irrigation farm running. Buyback may be seen as a fair way of compensating the owner but does nothing but damage to the economy of the town whittling away the need for employees and services.

WHY HAS BOURKE BEEN DEALT A BLOW OF 67% WHEN THE FIGURES SHOW A AVERAGE REDUCTION TO ACHIEVE CAP IN NSW CATCHMENTS IS 38%?? WHY WAS THIS DONE WITHOUT ECONOMIC CONSIDERATION ?.

WHY WAS TOORALE PURCHASED WITHOUT ANY ECONOMIC CONSIDERATION FOR THE TOWN?.

WHAT ABOUT THE PEOPLE?.

Bourke deserves to be treated evenly and the 67% is ridiculous as well as being done without any consideration for economies and people. (If 38% is the figure then Bourke should be 38% not 67%)

What about concentrating on the striving for supported efficiencies on farms and capturing water savings achieved by those efficiencies?

What about having the initiative and courage to take on a major scheme of putting some water into the system via the coastal rivers (e.g. Clarence River Scheme?). More water into the system would be good for the environment and the people along the system, allowing production of food for Australians!