

Dear Senators,

It would indeed be a travesty of justice and a calamity for communities in the region of the Murray Darling basin if environmental flows were the only consideration.

As a country resident in Northern Victoria I have seen the financial stress and despair of irrigators and their families when faced with The Plan.

After so many years of drought, hope was in short supply until the Federal government came up with the Murray Darling Basin Plan; then anger replaced despair. Irrigators burned copies of The Plan and met in town halls to protest the plan to take so much water from irrigation to "restore" the river for environmental purposes.

Even without the recent rainfall which has caused the Murray to flow as it hasn't for many years consideration for the people who depend on these river systems for their livelihood was almost non-existent (it seemed).

Towns and businesses, jobs and schools depend on irrigators/farmers for their very life.

The people must come first. Community and economic reasons must take precedence over environmental concerns.

Rivers do dry out and flood in Australia. They are not permanently wet as they are in Europe or the U.S. Australia is a land of long cycles of wet and dry. That is why previous governments built dams - for the dry periods.

The MDBP and the Rudd/Gillard government has caused much heartache and uncertainty and I hope that your Committee will find that the Water Act 2007 needs to be re-written to take into account the benefit of human intervention and put more than equal weight into social and economic considerations. A new MDBPlan must then follow.

Please do not condemn regional areas in the Murray Darling Basin to oblivion. It is the lifeblood of Australia.

Sincerely

Helen Leach