



The Hon Tony Burke MP

Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities

C10/19220

Mr John Murphy MP
Chair
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Petitions
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

10 FEB 2011

Dear Mr Murphy *John*

Thank you for your letter of 22 November 2010, informing me of the petition recently submitted to the Standing Committee on Petitions, urging the House of Representatives to reject any recommendation to cut the water supply to the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area. I regret the delay in responding.

I am aware that there is concern about the potential impacts of water reductions flagged in the Murray-Darling Basin Authority's (the Authority) Guide to the Proposed Basin Plan. However, the Australian Government is committed to delivering a healthy river system, strong regional communities and sustainable food production, and the way water has been managed in the Murray-Darling Basin will not support these outcomes in the long run.

The Government has committed to bridge any remaining gap between the amount of water that has already been recovered for the environment and what is required for the environment according to the Final Basin Plan. We will only purchase water from people who choose to participate in the Government's programs. We will not obtain water through compulsory acquisition.

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia is conducting a Parliamentary Inquiry, chaired by Mr Tony Windsor MP, into the impact of the proposed Basin Plan on communities as a whole. This inquiry will consider all of the issues – not just environmental – and allow communities to provide their views directly to Parliament.

I would encourage the petitioners to get involved in the Authority's planning process where they can most directly influence the approach the Authority takes on their issues of concern.

Yours sincerely

Tony Burke