

Moira Board of Management

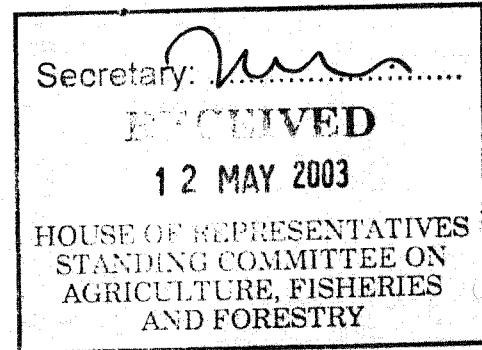
SUBMISSION NO. 155

Moira Private Irrigation District

The Secretary. P.O. Box 41, Mathoura NSW 2710.
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24th April 2003

Mr Ian Dundas,
The Secretary,
Standing Committee on
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Parliament House
Canberra
26000



Dear Sir,

Re: Inquiry into future water supplies for Australia's rural industries and communities

The management board of the Moira Private Irrigation District would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to provide input to the above inquiry, which was recently brought to our attention by federal Member for Farrer, Sussan Ley.

The Board has addressed the first four issues listed in your terms of reference in the attached pages and is hopeful its views will be taken into account during your deliberations.

We have also provided an overview of the District, how it came into being, the service it provides, and the problems it encounters in its daily operation.

In addition, we have provided what we regard as a cost effective means of improving flows in the Murray River from just above Echuca to the Murray Mouth in South Australia, an extensive section of the major waterway. This involves a by-pass of the Barmah Choke, a proposal which coincides with a recommendation to the Murray Darling Basin Commission by its scientific advisers.

We trust you will also give this option close attention. As indicated, our chairman, Mr Mick Barlow, will be happy to address the committee on the issue and arrange an inspection tour of the proposed route at your convenience.

We look forward to hearing from you

Kind Regards

Eileen Day
Assistant Secretary

INQUIRY INTO FUTURE WATER SUPPLIES FOR AUSTRALIA'S RURAL INDUSTRIES AND COMMUNITIES - 2003

Terms of Reference:

No.1: The role of the Commonwealth in ensuring adequate and sustainable supply of water in rural and regional Australia.

The Moira Private Irrigation District believes the Commonwealth needs to take on a co-ordinating role to achieve this aim. The current system is out of date and does not work as each of the states has its own agenda. We believe the Commonwealth needs to take control to ensure this most valuable resource is managed properly and distribution is equitable. Commonwealth intervention is required, as it was in the planning and construction of the Snowy Mountains Scheme. It was not until the Commonwealth took control that the whole project came together and people were able to move forward.

Water is the nation's lifeblood, and irrigators in all states desperately need certainty of supply as well as to be able to obtain water at a reasonable cost without extreme fluctuations. They also need to be secure in the knowledge that their allocations will not be eroded away as they have in the past.

Substantial changes implemented in the 1990s including a cap on diversions from the Murray River and the introduction of environmental flows have greatly reduced the amount of water available to Murray Valley irrigators who produce a significant amount of the nation's food and export markets.

No.2: Commonwealth policies and programs in rural and regional Australia that could underpin stability of storage and supply of water for domestic consumption and other purposes.

The storage facilities currently in place are not being properly managed. There are too many differing views on how it should be done. A national storage and distribution system would offer greater flexibility to draw from different catchment areas and improve predictability of supply. A review of storage and delivery efficiencies is required as to is a review of river flow management.

No. 3: The effect of Commonwealth policies and programs on current and future water use in rural Australia.

We believe the Commonwealth needs to take a greater role in formalizing property rights under the COAG principles. Again this is an area which was introduced by the Commonwealth and left to the states to refine. The Commonwealth needs to follow through on this as irrigators are still waiting on property rights.

A review of the CAP on diversions from the Murray River is required to ensure it is equitable.

An injection of funding is needed to enable research and development into new agricultural opportunities. Helping farmers to achieve more with less water would also benefit Australia's trade position.

Moira Private Irrigation District

No.4: Commonwealth policies and programs that could address and balance the competing demands on water resources.

The control of water needs to be simplified.

There desperately needs to be a balance between environmental issues and socio-economic sustainability with greater regard for the sustainability of rural communities dependent on irrigation and irrigation industries.

An urgent review of water sharing arrangements between the states is required to ensure equity, particularly in drought times. This should include the contribution each state is required to make towards environmental flows and other issues.

Our suggestion for improving flows in the Murray River

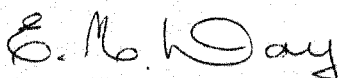
The Moira Private Irrigation District believes it has a valid proposal to put forward which would vastly improve flows in the Murray River from 64 river kilometers above Echuca all the way to South Australia – some 1776 kilometres. The proposal focuses on a narrow section of river known locally as the Barmah Choke. The narrowing of the waterway restricts daily flows to 8,500, insufficient for down stream requirements, and pushes unwanted water into the Moira Lakes and adjacent red gum forests during periods when they should naturally be dry.

MPID had initially planned a new intake channel to provide a more secure access to supply for its 100 plus members. However, we believe that by initiating a joint venture with benefiting stakeholders, that proposal could be extended beyond Moira and by-pass the Choke to improve flows and distribution. By-passing the Choke has also been recommended to the MDBC by its scientific advisers. Benefits would include the following:-

- Greatly improved flows downstream of the Choke
- The ability of downstream irrigators to access and transfer water from above the choke
- Improve security of supply and speed up deliveries to South Australia
- Reduce restrictions on Murray irrigators
- Optimise water efficiency
- Provide drainage facilities for the Moira Lakes Wetlands project
- Prevent over-bank spills into Moira Lake and the red gum forests when, under a natural regime, they would be dry.
- Reduce costs (shared between MPID, Wetlands Group, Department of Sustainable & Natural Resources and other key stakeholders etc)

I am enclosing a copy of our proposal to improve flows in the Murray River from above Echuca to the Murray mouth in South Australia. Our Chairman, Mr Mick Barlow, would be happy to address the committee and elaborate on the proposal at any time. He can be contacted on (03) 54838247 Mob 0428 505090

Kind Regards



Eileen Day
Assistant Secretary

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION HELD BY THE SECRETARIAT

ATTACHMENTS TO SUBMISSION NO. 155

Attachment A *'About Us:'* Moira Private Irrigation District.

Attachment B *'Barmah Choke: Proposed Moira Forest Bypass'*, 25 February 2003,
Moira Private Irrigation District.