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7 December 2010

The Chairman
Mr Tony Windsor MP
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia
PO Box 6021,
Parliament House,
Canberra NSW 2600

Dear Mr Windsor,

Submission – MDBA Proposed Plan

I am writing this submission in the hope that someone might see reason. I do not understand what the MDBA and government are doing to me, my family and my community. If you want to impose changes on a community, come and live in it for a while and get a real feel of the damage you are doing and how this effects everyone.

Here is the background to my history, which you are trying to destroy.

I am the grandson of a World War I returned soldier, who risked his life so that you and the rest of Australia could have the freedom you experience today. My grandfather came to this area, on returning from World War I, and settled in a small place about 6km from Griffith, called 'Lake Wyangan'. He had nothing, started from scratch and built his own house. When he thought he had made enough of a start, he sent for my Grandmother, whom he met while in England during the war, to come out to join him in Australia. She did and they were married.

Little did she know, when she arrived in 'Lake Wyangan', how hard it would be to make a living off the land, living over 600km west of Sydney, in the 1920's. They succeeded through hard work, forged friendships and luck. They, like so many with similar stories, are the ones who started this great place that you are now trying to destroy. They strived to better themselves, feed hungry mouths and produce food to sell.

They had a family, three girls, one of which was my mother. The girls were educated at the local schools, got jobs, travelled, and studied to better themselves and contribute to a better community.

My mother, who trained as a nurse, met my father while caring for him in hospital. My father left school at age 15, to work on his family farm with his four brothers and sister,

he didn't have a choice. They all worked hard, made their way in life and were able to eventually buy their own farms and build on their local investment.

My father's, family came out from Italy via America between the World Wars. Early on they experienced extreme discrimination, however they integrated into the community, worked hard and established themselves as a respected migrant family within the local community.

My mother and father raised my two brothers and I, on our family farm. We would come home from school and work until dark picking oranges so that we could also get ahead in life. My brothers and I all went way to university and studied to improve ourselves and put back into the local community.

At the age of 24, I married a local teacher who worked her way through university. We scraped together enough money to buy a block of land, borrowed from the bank and built our home on weekends while working during the day and night to fund it. We supported the local community and they supported us. We have two sons, who are currently attending one of the local high schools. They are both working part time in Griffith and are involved in the local community.

My home, was worth around \$500,00.00, 18 months ago. It is our biggest investment and a major part of my superannuation when I retire. Today, following the release of the MDBA plan, your plan, real estate price have dropped by between 25% – 35%. By making your announcement you have effectively cost my family \$175,000.00 and that's before I know whether I still have a job and whether my boys can continue in their jobs. Our whole future is in danger if the proposed water cuts announced proceed.

As you can see, my wider family has invested an infinite number of hours and years in helping establish our great community. My story is only one of 40,000 similar stories in our community. The 'unfounded' water policies are determined to destroy these communities and all these families. If water goes, jobs will be lost, and people will leave and families will be destroyed. Much worse is the toll your announcement will take on human life. This is real.

These decisions aren't just about the environment, they should be more important than that. They should take into consideration the consequences of human life.

I'm not a farmer. Who's helping me and my family? Lives and livelihoods are at stake! I don't get any compensation for the sale of water? Who's compensating me for the loss of \$175,000.00 in the value of my home? I have shown my commitment to this community, so why should I be punished and destroyed, so that you can continue on in your insulated political world. Or even worse, not be able to buy food because we no longer produce it here in Australia. When there are global food shortages in the future, the only countries that will be able to feed their people, will be the ones who produce their own food. Do you want Australian's to starve to death? This is happening overseas today. Unless we can guarantee that we produce our own food, that day will come.

There are better solutions for supplying more water into the environment. Don't take it away from irrigation communities, who produce food for our nation. Food you consume. Would you rather eat imported Chinese produced food? Are you aware of the sanitary practices (lack of) used in food production in Asia?

Why don't you create more storage systems to capture excess water in wetter years, like this year (2010), so that in the drier years the local communities and the environment can both benefit from the insurance of additional water storage. So much excess water is just wasted running out to sea!

Lastly, I would like to personally invite you to my community so that you may gain a better understanding of the consequences of your rash and unjustified decisions, made a world away from our everyday reality.

Before condemning this area, come and investigate its true worth and potential to the continuing growth of food production, rural regions and Australia as a whole.

Come and listen to the people with the experience, the will and know-how in our area.

There must be a better solution!

Yours Faithfully,

Peter Calabria