



Benerembah/Warrawidgee Water Users Association is a not for profit, voluntary organization based wholly within the irrigation area serviced by Murrumbidgee Irrigation, Griffith NSW. BWWUA represents 131 irrigation farming properties that have an approximate combined total water entitlement of 183,000 megalitres. Of which is around 167,000 of General security entitlement and 18,000 megalitres of High security entitlements. Growing a diverse range of annual crops and permanent plantings, including Almonds, grapes, various vegetables, beef, lamb, wool, cotton, rice, wheat, canola, barley and turf. BWWUA was formed to represent the interests of local irrigators with local issues and liaise with our irrigation corporation regarding water and land use.

BWWUA has limited resources for political campaigns. However, BWWUA has no choice but to make a submission to this organization, as we feel the new Basin Plan is absolutely flawed and will devastate irrigation areas and communities

The focus of the new Basin Plan is so bias toward the environment, the future of irrigated food production and regional communities is seriously jeopardized. To the point which regional Australia may well become unviable due to the loss of critical mass. This will be true of all regional businesses in water dependant communities, not just irrigators

The consultation process from the MDBA to date has been disappointing as we feel the process has been a farce, due to the narrow terms of reference being the water act 2007 and its subsequent focus on environmental outcomes. The MDBA has many hundreds of people and millions of taxpayer's dollars at it disposal to drive the agenda which has been hy-jacked by the environmental debate. Food production and regional Australia has been ignored.

Repeatedly, we have heard from the MDBA that the new BP will be based the 2007 water act. The 2007 water was supposed to reflect the principles of the National Water Initiative 2004. The NWI was agreed to by all parties concerned including peak irrigation lobby groups. However the principle of the triple bottom line in *social economic and environmental* has not translated to the 2007 water act. It is also a fact that the word "Food" not appear in the water act. As a side issue, the new department set up by the Gillard government to address population and food security does not mention "water".

Combined with climate change and population growth irrigated agriculture has never been more important. Once water leaves agriculture it will not return. Not even on an annual basis (temporary trade) as the infrastructure to facilitate delivery to agriculture will have been dismantled or run down beyond repair.

Prior to recovering any water for environmental needs the BWWUA agrees that the Environmental Water Holder must have a clear and defined plan for which environmental water will be used. This plan should clearly state:

- A starting point. Through previous water sharing plans, irrigators have already contributed vast amounts of water to the environment without compensation. Due to the lasting drought of this past 6-8 years the previous water sharing plans haven't ever really been activated

- What environmental assets are/ are not to be watered.
- What environmental outcomes must be achieved
- How these outcomes are to be measured for their success
- Have an open and transparent watering plan that is open to scrutiny

Water use efficiency is not just about arresting seepage and evaporation. Research and development of more water use efficient plants through scientific development will go a long way to making irrigation even more efficient securing food production in to the future. Research and development in this area should be funded where the food is grown. Regional Australia. Delivering water to the environment should also take in these principles

Therefore, the BWWUA recommends

- Only when water use efficiency projects have been fully explored and implemented, should the government contemplate entitlement purchases from willing sellers. Even in this situation, third party impacts may mean that those left behind will have to shoulder the increased cost of delivering water to a much smaller irrigation system
- that no entitlement be purchased from any irrigators until the environmental benefits of the drought being broken are realized
- That benefits of current water sharing plans already agreed to are more evident, after their re-instatement
- That the government should be concentrating on acquiring environmental water from other sources such as engineering works, not from food producers.

Regards
Hayden Cudmore
Chair
BWWUA