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## Submission on Prospective Environmental Projects for the Murray-Darling Basin

### Water savings.

Murrumbidgee Irrigation's ground-breaking re-configuration of Barren Box Swamp could well be a template for such areas as the Menindee Lakes which could give rise to massive water savings through reduced evaporation.

It could also have applications for The Lower Lakes which should be included in the mix, given the vast quantities of fresh water artificially stored there. The annual evaporation rates have been favourably compared with the amount of water required to produce one million tonnes of rice in areas like the MIA. And yet, the Lower Lakes appear to have been excluded from consideration by the draft Plan and elevated to the position of a sacred cow. If that's because of our international treaty obligations, who's to say returning the Lower Lakes to their natural estuarine environment that existed for millennia prior to a mere 70 odd years ago will breach those?

David Cleland Paton in his book 'At the End of the River' makes reference to damage to the lakes' shoreline from the (artificially) high levels of fresh water, suggesting that the effect of the barrages isn't necessarily favourable to the lakes. Surely the future of the Basin is important enough for the possibility of the barrages to be opened, if not removed, to at least be taken into consideration.

### Salinity.

According to Ticky Fullerton in her book 'Watershed' over half the Murray's salt enters the river in South Australia. The draft Plan's solution to salinity seems to be limited to flushing 2 million tonnes of salt into the Southern Ocean each water accounting period. This will include taking large volumes of water from the MIA, which being a closed system, doesn't contribute any salt to the Murray. As such, it seems to have been treated as a sacrificial lamb. And I understand that notwithstanding the voluminous quantities of water that have entered the Lower Lakes following recent rain events has made little difference to salinity levels there. Why is there no recommendation in the draft Plan for more salt interception schemes, such as that operated by Murray Irrigation? As a bonus this could create another decentralised industry.

### Sharing the burden.

In comparison to the disproportionately large quantity of water required from the Murrumbidgee catchment, metropolitan consumers have been left unscathed. Melbourne, though outside the Basin, grabbed some of its water via its controversial pipeline from the Goulburn River, yet has escaped attention, as has Canberra, which is taking extra water from the Murrumbidgee as well as increasing the size of the Cotter Dam.

Even Adelaide has been ignored. Although outside the Basin, it relies on the Murray for much of its water. It missed a golden opportunity years ago to harness water in the Mount Lofty Ranges and could still, if it wished, satisfy its needs by trapping its own rainfall in its own aquifers, thereby granting the Murray much needed relief.

Even a token effort on the part of these centres' populations would help Basin communities' acceptance of the need to make do with less water.

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