



## **Dissenting Report—Mr Patrick Secker MP**

There has been considerable new data and directions since discussions took place in March over the finalising of the Interim Report.

I believe it is now untenable not to support COAG proposals to commit an additional 500gl of increased river flows to the Murray River and the six 'icon sites' of the Murray Mouth, Coorong, Lower Lakes, Chowilla Floodplain, Gunbower / Perricoota, Barmah-Millewa Forests, the River Murray Channel and the Murray Cod, especially when other submissions clearly show that they can be achieved with minor effects on river communities.

Recent COAG proposals to increase the consultation with river communities and stakeholders are also to be welcomed.

As a result I cannot support the confusing concept arrived at by the Committee in 1.33 and, therefore, recommend deletion of the words in the last sentence:

*“In the Committees view, at this stage the science is not adequate on which to base far reaching decisions, possibly including the reallocation of water from irrigation to the environment.”*

It is confusing to the general public because I believe the science in many areas of the Murray Darling Basin is adequate (such as with the 6 icon sites).

It is also confusing and contradicted by this report in 2.119 which refers to capital works and infrastructure improvements to these six icon sites together with Recommendation 15(5.17) which refers to water savings becoming the property of the government which can then be used for extra environmental flows according to agreed formulas after extensive consultation.

Whilst 1.35 is merely reporting a recommendation from the interim report, I believe that a new recommendation should follow which reads:

*“The Committee recommend that the Australian Government urge the Murray Darling Basin Ministerial Council to commit to an additional 500gl in increased flows to the Murray River and:*

- *A comprehensive program of data collection and monitoring by independent scientists can be continued and extended with a robust, transparent peer review process with particular emphasis on the identified gaps in scientific knowledge particularly in Queensland and New South Wales.*
- *Non flow alternatives for environmental management be considered and reported on more thoroughly, and*
- *Annual comprehensive audits focussed specifically on the Murray-Darling basin water resources, including all new data be conducted.*

Whilst 1.36 again only reports a recommendation from the Interim Report tabled over 2 months ago, I think the Committee should make it clear that the words:

*“prior to proceeding with the proposal to obtain increased river flows”*

should be deleted to coincide with my suggested recommendation to follow 1.35.

I would also recommend the deletion of 1.37 because whilst not disagreeing with the sentiments expressed about adequate research and the possible effects on rural communities, it could confuse the reader over the COAG proposals for 500gl of environmental flows and other less defined proposals for 1500gl and 3000gl environmental flows.

I also believe it is superfluous to other recommendations already stated in this report and the Interim Report.

2.121 of the Report also notes Dr Blackmore’s comments on the 500gl as “*a fantastic start*” and that realistically it is probably as much as the MDBC could handle at this stage.

To coincide with the previous recommendations in this dissenting report and hence recommend that 2.129 be amended to delete the words:

*“The Committee believes that much better data and evidence is required before decisions can be made on the most efficient and effective ways to spend the \$500 million set aside by COAG..*

because it is superfluous to my other recommendation which deals with the additional recommendation inserted after 1.35.

It is my sincerest wish that my dissenting report will not detract from the many other good recommendations in this report dealing with environmental allocations, water policy framework, water rights and water trading, and water use efficiency.

Patrick Secker MP

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