

15th January 2009

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*The Secretary,
Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and Arts,
Parliament House,
Canberra*

My name is Bill Wells. I have been involved in Catchment Management in the Murray region 1994-2002. Since that date and currently I have been involved in Implementation work in the Goulburn Broken Catchment. I have been a Landcare practitioner for over 30 years.

I would like to submit my thoughts on the Water Amendment Bill 2008 to your committee for consideration.

Having lived in the Upper Murray for 27 years I am very familiar with the scenario of a river used mainly for irrigation water through Lake Hume.

Given that this system is in place and unlikely to be significantly changed, we appear to have to live with cold water releases, bank slumping and poor ecological health.

The major issue of water over allocation has reached crisis point having been exacerbated by drought (climate change).

It seems we are not capable or willing to learn from other civilizations that have been down this path in the past.

The only solution now is to incrementally cut water allocations until we have a sustainable flow in the Goulburn and Murray Rivers.

Principles of my Back to Basics Paper submitted to DSE Victoria are relevant to the whole Murray Darling System. This Paper is attached.

Thank you,



WH Wells

**BACK TO BASICS PAPER ON
NORTHERN REGION OF VICTORIA SUSTAINABLE
WATER STRATEGY**

1. **Must be predicated within context of Murray Darling Basin component of the National Water Plan.**
2. **Use the latest data from CSIRO Murray Darling Sustainable Yields project to benchmark surface water and ground water quantity including inter relationship.**
The CSIRO model has included likely climate change effects.
3. **Establish minimum flow requirement including groundwater and surface water requirement to maintain ecological processes, terrestrial and aquatic.**
4. **Calculate excess water available for human use**
 - **prioritise e.g.**
 - **(a) stock and domestic H**
 - (b) sustainable irrigation M**
 - (c) export of water from Basin L**
 (potential importers to use
 other options, restrictions.
 desalination)
5. **After arriving at amount of water over allocated and used, look at options to reduce –**
 - (a) inequities e.g. Cubbie Station (Sydney**

- Harbour size diversion)
(b) buy back from voluntary sources
(start education program on sustainable use)
(c) overall incremental reductions e.g.10-40%.

Point 5 will require a lot of political will (courageous) to implement but must be done if our grandchildren are to have a future in this, the Driest Continent on Earth.

To include the work 'sustainable' in Strategy title the following needs to apply –

Definition of Sustainable Development -

That which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability to meet the needs of the future.

Failure to plan in the right sequence without the latest data will result in an ad hoc situation such as Yea to Sugarloaf Pipeline which smacks of political expediency and narrow interest.