

## Inquiry into the Water Amendment (Saving the Goulburn and Murray Rivers) Bill 2008

As an individual, residing in Mildura who has been very much affected by the severe drought crippling our once thriving community and economy I support the Water Amendment Bill 2008. My reasons are many and varied but the most important reasons are:

- Water planning has been hurried and not properly thought out. Too many decisions have been made on the run. Impacts of new rules such as separation of water from land have not been properly thought through, not just from an environmental view but also from a social impact perspective. Further extractions are being allowed before the present crisis has been properly dealt with. Politics and power is being used to force further extractions, with the most notable being the north south pipeline to Melbourne and possible use of sleeper licenses in Queensland. The Sugarloaf pipeline is a breach of the Intergovernmental Federal Murray-Darling Basin Reform and runs contrary to over allocation but the present system has allowed Brumby to manipulate the system to suit him. Any benefits of water savings measures need to stay within the basin and this needs to be guaranteed for all time.
- Water efficiencies are important but we need further work to ensure that the market decisions with water are fully understood in terms of social impacts so that where those impacts are unacceptable, those communities are given proper time and support to be able to adjust. Efficiencies are good but also should be considered in the light of how a long established community will cope as new players on the market can out bid for water and simply knock out a once thriving community just like; a community that is totally dependent on the river.
- Sunraysia has been plunged into sudden and very severe change where there has not been enough social/economic support that really meets the needs of community members. The packages that have been proposed in response to adjustment have not provided the answer from many numbers of reasons. We have not been adequately consulted and the proposals do not meet our needs. These measures are being thrust like vultures on vulnerable people who cannot compete in this new market and who have not been given sufficient time and resources to adjust. There has been no level playing field. People were called vultures in the Victorian bush fires for taking opportunity with vulnerable people. That is no different to what is happening here.
- Why is this so? Well for many reasons there has been no level playing field but mainly because:  
People have been worn down by years of drought and harsh market conditions, vulnerable horticulturalists have been out competed in this new market by big MIS schemes and other big players who have the money and power to take over. Whole towns and regions economies are based on these

horticulturalists and with their demise so are the towns. These people and communities need time to be able to adjust without all the water in their regions being sold out of the region and out of touch of the local people who with time and proper help may be able to adjust so that they can regroup. They have not been given this time or proper help.

Because the politics of water has not been transparent. We have governments in bed with big business to get access to water for the top end of town at the expense of vulnerable communities, growers and environments. The Victorian Government is an example of where this has occurred. No matter what the community as a whole thinks, the Victorian Government is powerful enough to keep pushing forward to get what they want at the expense of communities and the river Murray.

Because the trading has been rushed in while support for water innovation measures has been largely ignored from the towns to the big cities. Rather than taking Murray Water for example, Melbourne should be recycling etc.

Because the horticulturalists that have been innovative and have spent money into water savings measures and innovations are not seeing any rewards. Some of these people are instead facing the worse allocations they have ever had and total lack of support. Where is there reward for their investment?????

Because of rules such as the Victorian government idea that trade can only occur north of the Barmera Choke and not the other way!! That's not an even playing field!

- While I'm against trade out of the basin, I do not rule out bringing additional water down from the north to supplement our system as the northern part of the country is in high rainfall areas, and so long as environmental values were maintained through careful planning and stipulations. Without finding additional water our system however cannot support out of system extractions at all.