



Murray Darling Association Inc.

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ABN: 64 636 490 493

The Secretary
Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House ACT 2600

26th January 2007

Dear Senators,

RE: Murray-Darling Basin Amendment Bill 2006

We apologise for the delay in this response but this was communicated to Ms Jeanette Radcliffe, owing to the work load of our unit regarding the drought and contact to various members of organisation for their opinions, unobtainable due to the pressure of fire fighting in CFS in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia.

That aside it is our intention to provide the following observations regarding the proposed amendments to the Murray-Darling Basin Act 19993, notwithstanding that the Prime Minister's Water Plan of 25/01/07 will most probably have some influence over the wording of parts of the amendment.

1. Will annual estimates be the resolve of the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, once the proposed National Water Authority is?
2. Will the Murray Darling Basin Commission still be chartered to carry out the "Commission's Water Business" as proposed in Clause 2, part (2) – a, b and C, page 5?
3. Clause 49 to be replaced with "49 (1) works or measures etc" assumes that under the New Proposed Plan, the status quo of the "Nominated Government" is unaffected.
4. Clauses 50, 51, 52 and 54 are acceptable.
5. Clause 55 is fine, again subject tot the powers of the New Water Ministry.
6. Clause 65 all reflects the need to bring the language into the 21st Century, and seems to provide clear direction to the responsible authority.
7. Clause 66 and 67 are fine under the existing State and Australian Government arrangements, but will the powers of the New Ministry change the percentage of what is a State's responsibility c/w the Commission's responsibility.

For conservation and sustainable development

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8. Forward Estimates, while necessary will require caution, based on the inflation that may be generated by the injection of \$10 billion play and the urgency to “get the job done”.
9. Clause 69 is open to conjecture in that “Pay any amount payable by it” seems to be an open ended cheque book statement.
10. Clauses 75 and 77 are a sensible and practical addition as are clauses 78, 80 and clauses 81 and 82 with reference back to 75 (1), is both practical and shows sound tracking principles.
11. Appendix 2 is taken as read and will require further additions as the works programs accelerate into 2016.
12. The Murray Darling Association has had little success with involving the Queensland government in the big picture, and reads that the Amendment Bill does not place any burden on that government for works that it has little or any control over.

In closing we would request that we be advised of any major changes in direction of the bill with regards to the proposed National Water Authority.

Trusting our comments, though brief, have contributed to this Senate Inquiry.

Yours Sincerely,

Ray Najjar
General Manager
Murray Darling Association

On behalf of:
Cr Bill Gorman – Corowa Shire
National Chairman
Murray Darling Association

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