

Toonborough Station
Wanaaring 2840

Paroo River Association Inc.
Wanaaring NSW

**Submission: Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
References Committee Inquiry into Water Policy Initiatives.**

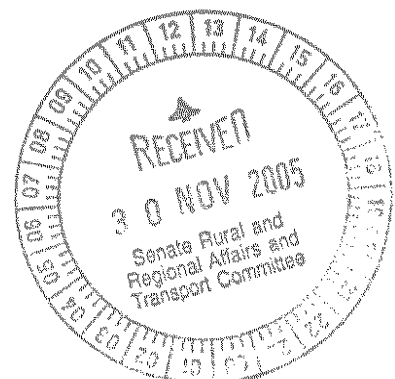
The Paroo River is the last free flowing river in the Murray Darling Basin. The river has its origins in Queensland and flows into the semi arid Western Division of NSW where the annual average rainfall is below 250mm. This river has no major dams, weirs or river diversions. When the big rains arrive the floods form a vast floodplain of approx 800,000 ha. These floods are not only the basis of floodplain graziers' livelihoods but they are also the opportunity feeding and breeding habitat for hundreds of thousands of unique plants and animals. The Paroo River also supplies essential floods that support the traditional grazing livelihoods of the many families and support communities that live along the system.

Years of scientific research and anecdotal evidence indicate that the Paroo has some of the most important wetland areas remaining in the Murray Darling Basin. Traditional grazing enterprises over many years have been able to operate and succeed without causing any negative environmental damage.

The Paroo River Association is committed to preserving the Paroo River as a free flowing stream so that positive environmental and economic outcomes can be sustained along the entire length of this iconic system.

The following points to achieve this outcome are: -

1. No Irrigation development be allowed on the Paroo
2. Activities are restricted to traditional and proven sustainable land use.
3. Waters of the Paroo River and its floodplain be allowed to flow without impediments or diversions.
4. Waters from the Paroo to only be taken for small communities e.g. Wanaaring, Hungerford and traditional stock and domestic usage.



5. If in the future water extractions from the Paroo are proposed support must be achieved from all stakeholders along the entire length of the river system. Environmental impact studies must also be completed to the satisfaction of community standards.
6. The Queensland and New South Wales governments uphold the principals of the Paroo River Agreement. This agreement as signed off by the Premiers of New South Wales and Queensland recognized that the Paroo River has important social, environmental, economic and cultural values which need to be conserved and promoted under joint State management.

Conclusion

The Paroo River system is in near pristine condition. If the status quo is maintained this river under proper management will remain a unique example of how long term production and the environment can be sustained into the future. Many rivers and streams in the Murray Darling Basin are in severe decline because of over development of the very limited water resource. While governments need to address the balance between community needs, economic development and the environment on many rivers in the Murray Darling Basin they can look to the Paroo as an example of a river that has a fair and equitable distribution of its waters. The Paroo must remains free flowing.

Robert Bartlett



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