

Bullabelalie
Brewarrina 2839 NSW

The Secretary
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs & Transport
Parliament House
Canberra 2600

30 November 2005

Dear Sir,

Our submission relates to the effects of overdevelopment of the water resource on the Lower Balonne Floodplain and how it affects our business as floodplain graziers.

Our family has been at "Bullabelalie" since 1953 and have been reliant on the benefits of periodic flooding from the Culgoa River as well as a resource for stock and domestic water supply. The average cattle numbers carried from 1953 to 1996 was 307 per year. From 1996 to 2005 it has fallen to 86 head per year. This is due to a direct loss of additional moisture on the floodplain as a result of over extraction of water upstream during flood events.

Our main water supply for 4000ha of the property was a ground tank situated on a floodplain channel 1.6kms from the Culgoa River which until 1985, (the year Cubbie weir went in) used to run every 2 years. In 1988 we installed a pump and pipeline on the river to fill the ground tank at a cost of \$15000.00.

As the pace of development increased, the duration of flows decreased as did the height of the flows. By 1996 we knew that we would have to provide a new source of water. In May 2002, we piped water from a neighbouring bore. The total cost was \$104,000.00 to us. We were not eligible for the Pipe and Cap Programme as no one else on the bore wanted to pipe water.

The cost of having to provide a different watering resource, coupled with the loss of beneficial flooding has provided my family with some extreme financial challenges.

The vegetation on the floodplain has changed due to the now extensive periods of no flooding. The coolabahs and lignum are dead or dying and the ground cover species are changing. Our stock records show a 56% reduction in the carrying capacity of our floodplain country which means our gross margin has been reduced by \$46000.00 per year over the last 9 years.

We lease "Weilmoringle Station" from the Indigenous Land Corporation. The Muruwari community, who live there, consider the river to be the most important feature of this land. They are deeply disappointed and angered at the way the river has been changed to such an extent that they can no longer even rely on it for water for their community. The

prospect of a flow in the river causes much excitement and gives the people a spirit of renewal as the fish start to come up from the Darling River.

The changes to stream flows has devastated the spirit of renewal and revival for both Aboriginal and floodplain graziers alike. The mood now, is one of despondency and disappointment in an unfair process.

This has been a complete genocide of a natural floodplain system to benefit only 22 irrigators. We simply ask this Senate Committee to recommend that a Commonwealth appointed Scientific Committee review the allocations and use the National Water Initiative as the lever to reduce extractions by 50% as Peter Cullen has suggested.

Yours sincerely

Edward Fessey