

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

Re: Submission to the "Inquiry into Water Policy Initiatives" on behalf of affected landholders along the Birrie river and floodplain
Submitted by Birrie River Representative Maurice Francis (Bill) Hagarty of Talawanta Brewarrina.2839 Phone/Fax (02) 68 744 976 on 30th, November, 2005
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- Landholders along the Birrie river occupy Western Lands Leases that have reliable Stock and Domestic water supplies and Beneficial Inundation factored into size of the leases as well as the actual layout when they were created as sustainably viable entities when expiring leases were subdivided for closer settlement (Principally for Soldier Settlement) These factors have been negated by overall allocation of water by the Queensland Govt.
- The Science that was used in the formation of the Water Resources Plan for the Condamine Balonne System only showed the effects of past activities but massive development had occurred and was occurring that would change the result dramatically. This factor was stressed by Professor Peter Cullen throughout his report but was ignored in the final WRP.
- No account has been taken of the Socio/Economic consequences of this effect. Leases are being made unviable and have reduced Capital Value and Borrowing power.
- These factors coupled with the pain of seeing your life's work and your lifestyle dying before your eyes has had a devastating effect on the morale of those affected.
- The stresses caused by trying to carry on under these conditions are immeasurable and run right through family life with younger generations choosing to move on before it is too late leaving the carrying on to an ageing population that is being robbed of it's will to battle.
- Reduction of flows has led to less flushing of the system and consequently more siltation. The riverine environment which was used to regular wetting has had a massive loss of Gums, Coolabah, Black Wattles and Lignum with consequent devastation of Natural Habitat. The whole floodplain has suffered an environmental change.
- Recent flow events have shown that the inflow allocation of 730 ml/day as Compensation flow is inadequate and must be increased to a minimum of 1500ml/day with more elasticity in management whereby inflows may be pre-released and tail flows have access to surcharging at Beardmore. Two recent events of 50000ml plus have not given Stock and Domestic water to all of the system. Even stored Compensation water that had been spilled was forced onto the floodplain due to in-stream structures. This could have been taken as overland flow water. Irrigators were asked not to take but could not be TOLD!
- Total extraction from any flow event must be limited to a maximum of 30% at all levels of discharge.

- Each level of flow must be looked as having a different role in the floodplain scenario. The flushing effect is common to all.
- Low flows Stock and Domestic
- Medium flows Riverine Environment, Riparian Zones, Channels and Indundation beneficial to both the Environment and Production. These types of events that sometimes occur during dry times can be a saviour to landholders and add great value to leases and have been factored in to Valuations.
- High flows The floodplain ! Remembering it's role in carrying nutritious materials to the river as part of providing food for fish etc as well as providing breeding grounds for various critters that breed there and young return to the rivers and those who do not make it feed birds . These events add greatly to the productivity and value of the floodplain to man and beast.
- An annual VOLUMETRIC Cap must be introduced immediately.
- The Licencing of Overland flows must Not be executed and the practice must be terminated . Under the WRP rules Irrigators can take O/L flow water and fill their storages (which were there before the moratorium on flood plain storage development was introduced) to their full capacity at \$0 and not bother taking Licensed river extraction waters at \$?.
- The Queensland Govt was responsible for the licencing of river extraction and must be held responsible for the over allocation of the resource and any Compensation that will emanate from the Capital, Income, Emotional and Stress related effect on Landholders as well as Indigenous people whose "lifestyle" centers around the rivers. The affect on town businesses and employment could be described as the domino effect.
- Queensland did not licence Overland Flow extraction and cannot be held responsible for Compensation but if they now grant licences for it then they will be.

On behalf of those concerned:

M.F.Hagarty