

4 Sep 2008

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

RE: INQUIRY INTO WATER MANAGEMENT IN THE COORONG AND LOWER LAKES

I am appalled at the state of the Murray-Darling basin and the effect this has had down-river on the Lower Lakes and the Coorong. I cannot believe that our governments have allowed this situation to degenerate to such a degree by over-allocation of irrigation and irresponsible decisions regarding the distribution of water along the river systems.

I respectfully submit that the Committee for the Inquiry Into Water Management in the Coorong and Lower Lakes takes into consideration the intention of the Victorian Government to remove more water from the system via further pipelines, in particular the North South Pipeline, from the Goulburn River – the major tributary of the Murray River - and recommends a reconsideration of the original Referral under s78 of the EPBC act, based on the fact that the original controlling provisions 18 and 18A are not broad enough.

There is substantial new information available which should be considered and the controlling provisions expanded to include 16 and 16B Ramsar Wetlands and 20 and 20B Migratory Species. It is a disgrace that proper consideration to environmental effects, not only along the Yea River valley North South Pipeline route, but extended to cover the effect that would occur to the Goulburn River, Eildon Weir and the entire Murray-Darling Basin was not taken. This is a massive project that has the potential to cause enormous ecological damage, purely to return Melbourne to the state it was before water restrictions for political purposes – in effect to allow the city to once again water gardens, wash cars and flush precious water down toilets and drains.

I read a recent article in the Weekly Times which showed massive theft of water into private dams from the Murray-Darling basin by landholders in Queensland. I was also present at the review of the North-South Pipeline in Yarra Glen, Victoria and witnessed the distress of one farmer who lived on the banks of Lake Albert as she told of the devastation to both Lake Albert and Lake Alexandrina. She cried as she related how her \$1million farm was now worth nothing and showed pictures of the extent of the devastation caused to the lakes, by the South Australian Government's strict policy of "Use it or Lose It" and begged that no more water be allowed to be removed from the system.

Mr Brumby plans to remove 75GL (and documents have already shown that he already plans to remove more) annually from a distressed, dying water and ecological system when Melbourne can get water in other ways, including desalinisation, accessing aquifers under the city, re-cycling water, making household and business premise tanks compulsory, building more dams where there is plenty of water and pumping to Melbourne.

Considering that Melbourne's water storages are 34% full; the main storage on the Goulburn River, Eildon Weir is only at 14% capacity; the Goulburn River received the worst report of 23 rivers in the system; irrigators are

commencing on zero allocations this season; and the existing pipeline from the Goulburn to Bendigo has failed miserably as the city is still on Level 4 restrictions with only 7% in their water storages, despite promises to the contrary; the folly of these measures are clearly demonstrated. We cannot in all conscience, allow Mr Brumby's egotistical, pigheadedness and arrogance towards the people of Victoria to take precedence over a properly controlled EES study and without following due process with regard to something of this magnitude. There will be no "savings" from Mr Brumby's measures as only a return to previous high rainfall will result in that. There is significant scientific advice that this will not occur and that the country will only become drier.

We live not far from the Goulburn River at Molesworth and 20 minutes from Yea where the water will be removed for the North South Pipeline, but plan to retire to Shepparton where we will live in a new estate close to the Goulburn River. During a recent walk along the banks near our new home site we were horrified to note the state of the Goulburn River. At Molesworth the water is green and flowing but by the time it reaches Shepparton an hour away it is a grey sludge and very low. Victoria Lake in Shepparton has dried up. Although artificial, it is the major social gathering place for residents in the hot, dry district and Shepparton Council has plans to improve this and create more leisure areas along the river. If more water is removed from the Goulburn not only will the residents of Victorian country towns suffer but consequently a reduced flow into the Murray will add to the devastation in the Lower Lakes and the Coorong.

I am 60 years of age. When I was 15 we camped on the Murray annually and you could see the bottom in 10 feet of water. It was crystal clear and beautiful - so much has changed in 45 years. It breaks my heart to see what is occurring and I cannot bear to think of the environmental damage that is being contemplated by the Victorian Government. When we first lived here our water supply supported 2 adults, 4 teenagers and 2 babies. The rainfall now barely supports two adults and we consistently need to cart water from the Goulburn to fill our tanks. We have lived on only tank and dam water for 30 years and know how to conserve water, as do all rural people – it is time for suburban Australia to learn to do the same and for governments to make tough decisions and not use quick political fixes without considering the long-term consequences on future generations.

The Goulburn River is a major part of the Murray Darling Basin system, despite Mr Brumby's attempt to disassociate it. I ask that you consider my submission and ensure that the Victorian Government does not ignore expert scientific advice just because they do not wish to lose face over having already hired a contractor and commenced work, without proper environmental studies. Please make sure they are forced to comply fully with s78 and take into consideration the effect these diabolical measures will have on the greater Murray Darling Basin and consequently the Lower Lakes and the Coorong.

I remain, respectfully yours,



Cherril Colleen Jones

(03) 5773 4318