

I wish to express my extreme gratitude to the Senate for allowing public comment on the Water Management Crisis in the Lower Murray Lakes and Coorong.

My comments address your terms of reference as follows....

1.a

The volume of water that could be provided is best answered by your independent audit which I commend you for instigating.

I would like to suggest that even if the amount available is short of what expert opinion says is enough for the Lakes, consideration of the fact that any flow to the Lakes at this critical time is most important as we must not let the Lakes get so bad that those that wish to let sea water in have a reason to do so. Sea Water is not an option.

Lake Alexanderina is to the south of the Angas Bremer Water management area. This is an area with an underground aquifer. That aquifer extends under the Lake bed.

There is insufficient understanding of the workings of this valuable natural asset to risk damage from salt water intrusion. There is personal communication between local people that indicates a link between the upper aquifer and the Lake. References: Terry Sim, author A FRESH HISTORY, Sim and Muller, communicates knowledge of a bore used pre barrages and in drought conditions by paddle steamers for good quality water for boilers, at the end of the Miland Jetty. Fisherman Henry Jones has knowledge of freshwater springs in the lake. Cattle graziers Mike South and Colin Grundy observed cattle pugging in the lake bed, in salty water that has seeped through the barrages, and on further investigation found the cattle had found fresher water seeping up from the lake bed.

1.b.

i. It may surprise the Senate how many irrigators would be prepared to support the Environment in its time of need. I believe that a fair commercial value paid to them to lease water for the environment may be all that is needed. The value of the lost crop would need to be considered in that commercial consideration.

ii.

Alternative options. Purchase of carry over water from all States where possible. In the Lower Lakes where water is becoming hard to access and too saline for some crops, many irrigators will consider selling their water this season. It will be sold most likely to those irrigators up stream and exacerbate the problem in the lakes. It is my opinion that it would be better to pay out the Lake irrigators to leave the water in the system and gain some small environmental benefit. The Management aim is surely to save the lakes, not restore them at once, we need to buy time and avoid irrational decisions like sea water intrusion.

iii.

Transmission losses is an antiquated term that shows no understanding of our aquatic environment. Losses of water, as it flows down a river, are in fact making a Healthy Working River. Ground water is replenished. Backwaters are the engine room of native fisheries. However to answer the Terms of reference point I believe all that is important is to sustain the water at a minimal level to ensure its survival until better rains come, perhaps this summer, down from the Northern Catchment of the system.

v.

in my opinion irrigation infrastructure fast tracking is essential. However the net gains should go to the environment, not to irrigators to plant more crops. It is one area that will help the Lakes long term.

1.c.

IT WOULD BE LESS DAMAGING TO HAVE AN ACROSS THE BOARD REDUCTION ON ALL LICENCE HOLDERS AS WELL AS PURCHASE THOSE WILLING SELLERS TO SPEED UP THE PROCESS AND NOT DESTROY ANY PARTICULAR RURAL COMMUNITIES,.

1.d.Related Matters.

Over allocation, and the drought have combined to deal a cruel blow to all of the water users and the environment of the Murray Darling Basin.

We must address over allocation as a matter of national emergency. Our river is being destroyed because of it. Drought is a natural event in Australia. Overuse is unforgivable. We

expect our government to show leadership on this issue. Remember the Murray Mouth blocked in 1981, and yet we still allowed further allocation of the resource!
Those that wish to engineer their way out of this problem have 100 years of evidence stacked against them. The construction of weirs and other schemes only impedes the natural course of the river . It will not negate the need to address over allocation of the resource so get on with it!
The new managers of the Murray Darling should relocate to Goolwa so they can see first hand how good their work has been.All Rivers should be managed from their outfalls, not their headwaters.

2.

a. Inadequate. All rivers that contribute to the system should be included . The Golbourn and Murrumbidgee and those in the Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges that flow into the lower Murray all should have end of system flows and be managed from the Junction upwards. they are all over utilised.

b. too slow. c. too slow

d. More meters, heavier penalties, make it a ***serious*** offence, all that and not policed at all !?! In thirty years of irrigation I have no recollection of any one convicted !

f. inadequate,overburdened with too many departments and levels of governance.

g.

For us to survive climate changes we need adaptive management. Environmental water flows allocated first , critical needs second, irrigation third.Critical needs must be managed better than present. At the moment there is a constant increase in demands for water by urbanisation that seems to go on unchecked. Many new buildings don't capture their rainwater from roofs or stormwater from blocks, but demand water from another source.

yours faithfully

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