

Re inquiry into Water Management of the Lower Lakes and Coorong

To the Secretary of Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

What has happened?

- It is my understanding, Senate, that \$11.2 million was paid by the South Australian government to help build Medindie Lakes in the 1960's?
- Where is South Australia's share of the water storage which the South Australian public has paid for?

Whose problem is it?

It is every irrigator's problem, from the Murray Mouth to the head of the system in NSW & QLD, this also includes Victoria. If every irrigator were to relinquish 5-10% of their water license allocation and were compensated for it at the current value, we would all share the rivers problem. The smaller communities and farmers would then be able to survive.

What can be done?

The illegal extraction of water from the rivers and the storing of it in recently constructed dams should be stopped immediately. This particular practise stops the rivers natural flows. We all know the river is in dire trouble. Water must be allowed to flow down the river for the health and the future of the river system. Work with Mother Nature not against her, or like most Mother's she will punish us all. Water taken from the river should be metered as it leaves the system, not after it is stored in dams and channels.

Finger pointing

The evaporation losses which occur in these holding dams are caused by man and are not a natural occurrence. The natural losses from the Lower Lakes is between 400-750gl per year, not 1000-1400gl per year which is so often reported by the press, this then creates negative feelings towards the Lower Lakes.

The run off into the lakes from the hills and tributaries in a year with above average rainfall, (as in 1992 for example) contributes 100gl per year.

South Australia has the most efficient irrigation practises on the river. Every litre of water is accounted for and we know what our losses are. South Australia uses 5% of the total systems water, producing 24% return of the produce from the whole river system.

Waste not, wants not!

South Australia uses extremely efficient irrigation practises; therefore the water is not being wasted as is believed in the other states. We are at the end of the river system, but we are the cause of the river's problems, as is the common belief.

The allocation upstream must be addressed immediately otherwise no-one will survive. The doubling of allocations (since 1996), cannot succeed due to less water into the system.

No guts no Glory!

We need strong leadership from the Federal Government. To take the hard yard and stop the wrong practise of stealing water from our once mighty river. We need action now,

not in 5-10 years time. We only have months in which to address these problems, we no longer have years to right the disgraceful injustice which is happening at the moment.

The river's problems are not completely caused by climate change; it is over allocation, greed and mismanagement which have created a man made drought.

Why?

Why can't some of the snowy water be used down stream for environmental flows? We do not need big amounts to survive until next July in 2009. The inflows from the hills in the south have helped the lakes greatly this year. The lakes are so close to surviving, don't kill them now. The lower lakes have helped to keep Adelaide alive by drawing down on them for the last two years, now they need a little help in return. Remember, it is man who has failed the lakes, due to over allocation and greed, not the lakes which have failed us.

Salt water not the answer

Salt water is not an option to saving the Lower Lakes; the salt will cause more environmental damage. It will destroy any underground water which is helping some farmers to survive at the moment.

Before the barrages were built, landholders lost around 30-50% of the stocking rates due to salt water flowing into the lakes. It took 40 years to come to a decision about the barrages, don't take another 40 years to come a decision about the river and lakes, it does not that much time left before it's problems are irreversible.

Weir not happy!

The other states want to have the weir built, what they don't seem to realise is that it will completely kill the river system. The weir will stop the flushing of the salt out of the river, via the Murray Mouth. In 1981 the mouth was blocked by silt, this blocked the rear end of the river. Lake Albert is the first lung, which has been blocked by the dirt wall at the ferry in Narrung. The weir, if erected at Wellington, will take out the second lung which is the beginning of Lake Alexandrina. The continuous flowing back and forth oxygenates the water and flushes out the salts from the river. The blocking off of these lakes will then be the start of the cancer of salt going up the river to Lock 1, then Lock 2. How fast this will happen will depend on how greedy we are concerning the continued over extraction of water from the river system. Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert are a vital part of the river's lungs and overall health, flushing out the cancerous salts.

Dairy Region

A once thriving Dairy region has been decimated. With a carrying capacity of over 12,000 cows 2 years ago, there now is under 1000 cows in the area. We understand we can no longer irrigate, but don't kill the river.

Our present governments do not seem to understand how much is being affected by the loss of water down on Lake Albert; the area seems to be ignored. The general consensus is that the lakes can not be saved. Have the people who are in power tried?

All we are asking for is a fair go for our farmers, doctors, hospitals, schools and community. We can all survive with a little help and support, with positive not negative thoughts for the long term survival of our once pristine and unique area.

Yours truly,
John Eckermann