

Submission for the Senate Inquiry into Water Management into the Coorong and Lower Lakes.

Submitted by:

Ali Baker

Dear Senators,

I submit this on behalf of my family and community. I live here on Kaurna country on the Adelaide Plains.

I urge the leaders of Australia to take immediate action and invest in infrastructure that conserves water and prioritises our natural ecosystems. Our environment needs to be prioritised over industry, and cities need to be more responsible for their water usage.

The prime minister needs to issue a statement informing all Australians of the gravity and urgency of the current emergency, asking all those who depend on the Murray Darling Basin to conserve water in every way possible. People who have the means should be urged to purchase rainwater tanks and have them plumbed into their house. There are loop holes in the legislation for the installation of rainwater tanks into new housing builds. These new buildings should be as water self sufficient as possible.

It is not right that cities and their citizens should totally deplete our natural rivers and water systems. All Australian people need to take responsibility for saving our environment.

It is hard for the citizens of Adelaide to understand the gravity of our water crisis when we have just had rain that is temporarily greening our gardens. Citizens need to be educated to understand things about water quantities, use and management that they don't now generally know - for example, most people have no idea that it would be better if we all captured our grey water even during rainy winters and chucked it on the garden rather than letting it go down the drain and out to sea.

All cities and towns who depend on the Murray Darling basin have a responsibility to build infrastructure that captures and stores storm water and grey water. These systems need to be **built now**. Not enough has been done in relation to sewage and grey water recycling or storm water capture and storage.

Desalination is an absolute last resort and people need to be made aware of the true cost to the environment as well as the economic costs to the community. Federal, state and local government needs to invest money (wisely) into infrastructure that recycles the water we currently have.

The other issue in relation to water management that needs to be addressed by this inquiry relates to the **regulation of Adelaide's underground aquifer**.

Is it true the salt mine uses more water from the aquifer annually than is going into the aquifer?

Local council needs to be taking real responsibility for developing wet lands, and the houses in my local area that are using 'bore water' to simply maintain front lawns need to be monitored. **Bore water should be given as a priority to market gardeners and people growing food**. Industry that is relying heavily on our underground water should be asked to find alternatives or move to places where this kind of use of water is more sustainable. I would like to cite the example of California where the long term misuse of the water from the underground aquifer has left the landscape sunken, caved in and scarred permanently in some areas. Our underground water is precious and must be looked after.

The Adelaide Metro Area and surrounds is a relatively young community, with the rates of consumption and increasing burden on this fragile environment unsustainable. The environment supports us as citizens and business and industry. The Murray-Darling Basin is our nations most valuable resource and it is in critical condition. We need to educate and inform rather than spin-doctor and deflect the issue. Nature doesn't spin doctor – it tell the truth for all the world to see.