

10<sup>th</sup> September 2008

The Secretary  
 Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport  
 Department of the Senate  
 PO Box 6100  
 Parliament House  
**CANBERRA ACT 2600**

SENATE INQUIRY INTO WATER MANAGEMENT IN THE COORONG AND LOWER LAKES

To whom it may concern:

I wish to outline some of pressing problems that are facing the area between Lock 1 (Blanchetown) and the Murray Mouth (including the Coorong) the socio economic ramifications of drought, the over allocation/extraction of water throughout the Murray-Darling Basin and climate change.

I represent no particular group though as I was an elected member of the Mid Murray Council, a past South Australian Vice-President of the Murray Darling Association, the Secretary of Region 6 of the MDA and a trained 'climate change' presenter my main interests lie from Lock 1 to the Murray Mouth (including the Coorong) though what ever I do or seek must be in the best interests of the Murray-Darling Basin.

The effects of the prolonged drought and predicted consequences of climate change are weighing heavy on the minds of not only the irrigators in the region but also all facets of these close-knit communities with negativity showing in the body language of those usually stoic farmers/irrigators.

As a consequence of the above a number of members the communities are on suicide watch and have voluntarily forfeited their guns and ammunition.

The needs of the main Local Government communities of: Mid Murray, the Rural City of Murray Bridge, Coorong Council, Alexandrina Council and Victor Harbor Council and to a lesser degree Karoonda Council is, what is hardest to get, sufficient "freshwater" to make things right or if that is not possible (which is what it seems) the guaranteed supply of enough potable water for stock and domestic purposes (critical needs) and as soon as possible fresh-water for the river (we are watching our river die and it is fast becoming like the Colorado River in the United States for extreme similar reasons).

A healthy river will be a river that caters for the community, the economy of the Murray-Darling Basin including our region and the environment.

It is disappointing that South Australia has seemingly been by-passed when major considerations for the Murray-Darling Basin are on the table, all we seem to hear about is the evaporation from the Lower Lakes (Alexandrina & Albert) and the Coorong.

If I didn't know better I would think that there is no evaporation East of the South Australian border and to that end we are being told a temporary weir should be constructed near Wellington and sea-water be allowed to invade the Lower Lakes.

I would seek consideration of the following points:

- \* That there be no construction of a proposed temporary weir,
- \* There be no invasion of sea-water into the Lower Lakes,
- \* That the Barrages at the southern end of the Lower Lakes remain as is,
- \* Recognition that the Coorong and Lower Lakes are a RAMSAR declared area,

In seeking the above I do so in the knowledge that the custodians of the area the Ngarrindjeri oppose any man made changes to that sacred land.

- \* That consideration be given to those families who know nothing but working on the land who because of the persistent drought and the on-set of the predicted effects of 'climate change' don't see a future remaining on the land.

Maybe some sort of plan could be drawn up so they remain on the land (so it doesn't just become a waste land) as care-takers/custodians of the property and if possible restore that area to, or as close as possible to, its native state. If that particular land is not viable or cannot return to income producing I see a massive problem in the future managing properties after the families, broken and confused just walk away. These families/people could be employed and paid and assisted to re-store that land. For the reason of sequestration of carbon under 'climate change' just think of the value adding this could produce. If small country communities can be assisted to survive they will regain some of the pride that has basically been beaten out of them by the years of struggling against mother-nature and we all know who wins that fight.

We in this country are facing an uncertain future, like never before, and we are the custodians of the heritage we pass on to our families it is the country that so many young men and women fought, suffered and died for. We as a country lost two generations of leaders in two World Wars and we cannot let that be a loss in vain.

I have spent many hours visiting and talking to many people on either side of the Lower Lakes though mainly the Eastern side and they tell me, **“we are suffering and will have to continue to do so until we receive adequate fresh water but please don't make our suffering worse by allowing sea-water to invade our Lower Lakes.”**

As a servant of the people I humbly seek the Senate Standing Committee's support and I will make available time if required to do so to discuss with the committee my desires.

Yours sincerely,

Peter R. Smith OAM

**“Service is the price you pay for the space you occupy on this earth”** Anonymous  
*“Help save the River Murray & the Murray-Darling Basin conserve and use water wisely”*  
**“Ensure the path we walk leaves only footprints not scars”** E. Rowe 6/04/2007