

[Submission Number 008](#)

Dear Madams, Sirs

I am an 81 year old semi retired mixed irrigation farmer, presently having only a small holding [thank God]. We have farmed in the Moulamein- Barham area for over 60 years. After reading your report, here are my comments.

Draft recommendation 1:

We do have strong effective local leadership who have articulated our concerns for years, but the Powers That Be are completely deaf to them and take absolutely no notice and forge ahead with their agenda, regardless and oblivious to the problems they are creating. Their tools are obfuscation and passing the buck and ignoring us. As you state, feelings of hopelessness abound, depression is rife as people have had their water stolen from them by Government policies. To see water that would have been theirs used to float boats and run into the sea is very frustrating and depressing. Young people are leaving the area as uncertainty is the killer. If the Government is going to take our water forever, just say so, pay us compensation, and we can get on with our lives. Compensate not just the farmers affected - the list of affected people is a long one and won't come cheap.

The 450gls of upwater is apparently still on the table. Why!!! Do they need more to do more damage? Unlike the staff in the MDBA offices in Canberra, we in the regions see every day the damage that is being done by the distribution of environmental water. The carp breeding, the wetlands flooded far too much and in poor health, the river bank erosion and subsequent shallowing of the river bed, the Black box trees dying because man made floods are higher than past natural flooding, the algal blooms as nutrient rich environmental water is returned to the main stream, the black water events and don't forget the fish kills. What about the on farm environment which has been decimated because the water has been taken away. What about the Bitterns which now have nowhere to nest because there is little or no rice. Japan has declared their rice crops to be Ramstar listed, why not Australia?

We see a Basin Plan which has created enormous disruption in people's lives, which is so obviously based on a series of blatant lies some of which I will detail; the lie about the Coorong being in poor health due to upstream extractions when in fact drainage works in SA have denied the Coorong of the freshwater it used to receive; the lie about the Lower Lakes having always been fresh; the lie about dilution flows being required in SA. Do you wonder why people are unhappy? They know they are being shafted.

Draft recommendation 3:

If we could have our water back there would be no need to throw money about in the irrigation regions. Just let us get on with what we do best, growing cheap bulk staple food and fibre and save taxpayers money. I believe that by the time the coronavirus emergency is over our Government will be seriously broke so they need to stop wasting money.

Draft recommendation 5:

The neutrality test is terribly important and has never been considered. Transitioning to a less water dependent future means taking our lifeblood away leading to the death of the area.

Draft recommendation 6:

Why is the capacity of the choke suddenly becoming an issue? Water user groups tried to get action on this issue in the past but were told “We can’t do anything to the Choke, it’s fish habitat and can’t be touched in any way” Now, with the almond plantations at risk it’s a big issue. Methinks the corporates have deep pockets and brown paper bags have found their way into the corridors of power.

Draft recommendation 14:

In evaluating the benefits or otherwise of environmental works including flooding, it is important that the community should be involved, consulted and listened to .For too long we have had to listen to the people who create these programs marking their own homework and praising themselves and a lot of locals are extremely dubious about their claims.

Draft finding 11:

You say that drought conditions are the main driver of water prices. I disagree, I believe that water removed from consumptive use has had a bigger effect. The water we watched run down the Murray this year and last, which was either evaporated in the Lower Lakes or ran into the sea, could have given NSW and Vic irrigators a substantial increase in allocation. Remember the old fairytale saying “willful waste brings woeful want” could even play out during the coronavirus crisis.

On page 53 you state that the plan has reduced consumptive water use by 20%. In my area that figure is a 100% reduction and for 2 years running. Do you wonder why we are unhappy .We believe we have been singled out for special treatment. Even the water wasted from overbank flows in the Choke comes off our account, as well as the conveyance losses in delivering water to SA.

Draft finding 39:

Spot on

Draft finding 40:

The bulk of the text detail how much of the Government funding to help communities has been wasted. However this is not mentioned in the finding which gives a different view.

Nowhere in this draft do I see any recognition of the ticking time bomb created by allowing massive plantings of almond trees in the lower murray. This will see up to 20 megalitres per hectare of water applied to porous soils with a saline subsoil. This will have horrendous implications for water quality in future years. Please note: rice may only be grown on tested non-permeable soils and if water use exceeds 16 mg per ha, rice can never be grown again on that location .Are almond plantings subject to these conditions? I don’t think so.

In this time of crisis we are a nation where a food shortage is looming .Presently we have a shortage of durum wheat for pasta, no Australian rice in the country, dairy products being imported, limited supplies of Australian pork [have you tried to buy Australian bacon], all products we can grow in the MD Basin if we had water .But we can’t, we don’t have the water. Do you think this is what Australians want?

I wish to acknowledge the work of the panel, a massive job, done well, which you mostly got right. No matter what you publish, not everyone will be happy.

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