

[Submission Number 015](#)

1. What organisation (if relevant) are you from?
[REDACTED]
2. Please enter your first name:
[REDACTED]
3. Please enter your email address:
[REDACTED]

I wish to make a submission to the Murray-Darling Basin Socio-Economic Assessment Panels Draft Report.

In general I found the Report to be an accurate assessment however there are two areas I would like to address:

1. On page viii you mention how you “heard from people living in the Basin who have a deep distrust in governments - local, state and federal”.

I would like to add one other category to that and that being the organisations responsible for implementing, coordinating and monitoring the natural resource management programs.

I will use my local agency - [REDACTED] Authority as an example, but I note similar concerns expressed by others regarding the [REDACTED] including their [REDACTED] who expressed “extreme frustration” in trying to get the problem of water transfers addressed.

These authorities seem to have become independent bodies with no accountability and setting their own programs and rules. They are certainly not trusted by the local community yet they are the interface between the Community and Government.

My areas of concern are:

a. Community engagement

I was recently offered the opportunity to “provide input” into one of their advisory groups and at the same time an existing member of the group, when a question was asked, was told “*We understand there may be a perception that the Group will have input to these reports; however, this is and has always been outside the scope of the Group*”.

b. Major projects being “dropped” on the community already approved, financed and with no Environmental Effects Statements being available.

For example, a project costing \$13.5 million ([REDACTED]) is now being reviewed as to why it doesn’t work, but it is a case of the [REDACTED]. The [REDACTED] responsible for building the [REDACTED]. The review should be by a totally independent body.

c. Newspaper articles reporting false claims from [REDACTED] staff.

When requests are made for the data to support these claims, often no data is available/provided.

d. When the data shows the claim to be false no action is taken and the claim is often repeated at some future date.

e. This false data is then passed onto other organisations, e.g. the Victorian Environmental Water Holder who then make significant decisions based on this false data.

I totally agree with your Draft Recommendation 14 and that communities must be involved on a voluntary basis and not appointed as seems to be case at the moment, but I would go one step further to address the issues mentioned above. There needs to be more open communication between these

bodies and the community before major projects are even commenced, and then probably some form of Ombudsman to address issues from a totally independent point of view.

2. On page x of your draft report you mention “to monitor and evaluate environmental **benefits**”. This assumes there are only benefits whereas I believe the word benefit should be replaced with the word **impact**. It is becoming obvious that not all the environmental actions occurring are benefits and this will only increase as time progresses.