

## Socio-Economic Assessment of Murray-Darling Basin Submission Template

### Submission Number 022

1. What organisation (if relevant) are you from?  
[REDACTED]

2. Please enter your first name  
[REDACTED]

3. Please enter your email  
[REDACTED]

### **Bring communities back to the heart of conversations and action that decide their future**

This section encompasses the following categories:

- Governments must rebuild community trust in water reform, and lead from the front
- Current funding is not enough to support community led transitions for Basin communities impacted by water reform
- Socioeconomic neutrality criteria should be accompanied by a process to provide flexibility for communities to move to less water dependent futures where communities request this

4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the Panel's key findings and recommendations, and why? Please provide as much detail as possible.

REC 1. Strongly agree. Having made 2 trips in to the Basin with the NFF and State SFO's, there was a constant frustration and lack of trust with Governments and bureaucracy. This was strongest in N.S.W. and least so in S.A.. In N.S.W. the point was made in most meetings that this extended to N.S.W. Government Departments not working together, and examples given of instances where they openly disagreed on issues in front of growers. This will always erode confidence and add to frustration. I strongly agree that States need to work hard to reach consensus at the MDB Ministerial Council and not deliver mixed messages through the media following meetings. I also agree with the recommendations on transparency, accountability and certainty. The Basin wide information platform was a conclusion we also made after our trips. Likewise with water literacy and local leadership. REC 3 Agree with an extension beyond 2013, not sure than 10 years may be a bit long? REC 4 I agree that there should be a weighting for disadvantaged communities, but this needs to be considered against what will be best overall for the Basin system.

5. Are there any significant gaps? What are we missing?

Whilst I strongly support the bulk of your recommendations, I am very strongly of the opinion that we should be trying to achieve the bulk of, if not future savings through water saving efficiency programmes. Experience tells me we can both save water and increase productivity at a cost to Government and industry which is feasible given the increase in economic activity. Having had Ministerial oversight of the Loxton Irrigation Rehabilitation (years around 2000) which replaced open channels with pipes, and Chair of the Steering Committee for the S.A. River Murray Sustainability (SARMS) project I have seen what can be achieved, SARMS achieved 40 gl in savings for \$120m, and was accompanied by another \$120 for economic development. This was a major boost for S.A. River communities and saw many times more in investment and has many great outcomes. On the trips to the Basin, I sought out people who have been involved in the efficiency programmes over recent years. I did not talk to anyone who felt that they had

achieved well beyond expectations. Travelling through Basin regions upstream of SA, I am convinced that there are amazing efficiencies that can be made which can help, growers, the Rivers and the national economy. I am of the opinion that that is how we should achieve the future savings, even if it does take longer. The current way is at too much social and economic cost.

6. If implemented, do you think our recommendations would make a difference or have a benefit to you and/or your community?

Yes, communities can certainly benefit.

### **Meet the pressing needs of First Nations**

This section encompasses the following categories:

- More needs to be done to improve social, cultural and economic outcomes for First Nations communities

7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the Panel's key findings and recommendations, and why? Please provide as much detail as possible.

They sound alright to me, but is not an area where I have much experience, particularly in the eastern States.

8. Are there any significant gaps? What are we missing?

9. If implemented, do you think our recommendations would make a difference or have a benefit to you and/or your community?

Certainly the First Nation Communities need to have a say, and have their rights and needs acknowledged. I believe your recommendations would improve this.

### **Implement water reform with greater care so potential harms are minimised**

This section encompasses the following categories:

- From this point on, governments should match the pace of all further water recovery to the capacity of systems and communities to absorb and adjust change
- Basin communities need greater clarity around river operations
- The quality, timeliness and awareness of indicators related to wellbeing and the environment need to be better
- Research and innovation need more focus on helping farm businesses transition to flexible farming systems
- Moving towards more sustainable irrigation infrastructure

10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the Panel's key findings and recommendations, and why? Please provide as much detail as possible.

Rec. 6 refers to NSW and S.A. establishing new or expanded water licences. I assume that you are meaning Development Approvals? It is many years since SA established new licences. The situation with the Barmah Choke is serious. It is very concerning as to how this could happen if there was communication and collaboration between those managing the River and those deciding which water licences to purchase. It was also suggested to us that there was a lack of communication between those handling the environmental water and the allocation water - but not sure if that one valid or not. REC. 14 correctly identifies the need to measure the benefits of the water savings to be able to balance the argument and guide future decision making.

11. Are there any significant gaps? What are we missing?

I think there needs to be more emphasis on metering and measurement. There is very little confidence in metering and compliance. With the way technology is expanding, I would have thought that we could far better meter, manage and give confidence across the Basin. And the more transparent any such system was, the higher confidence in management in the Basin. Also, this would be a major boost to better management of the Basin overall.

12. If implemented, do you think our recommendations would make a difference or have a benefit to you and/or your community?

Yes.

### **Support the capacity of communities to adapt to change**

This section encompasses the following categories:

- Basin communities need greater clarity around river operations
- The quality, timeliness and awareness of indicators related to wellbeing and the environment need to be better
- The Australia Government needs to further invest in regional connectivity in the Basin

13. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the Panel's key findings and recommendations, and why? Please provide as much detail as possible.

I agree. I believe where feasible towns should research alternative water sources. Unfortunately some have very limited options. In REC. 17 I am not sure a Basin -specific Infrastructure Fund has sufficient merit, as other regions of Australia have the same issues and may feel disadvantaged in the MDB had priority beyond "on merit".

14. Are there any significant gaps? What are we missing?

15. If implemented, do you think our recommendations would make a difference or have a benefit to you and/or your community?

Yes

### **Address critical and urgent gaps in wellbeing, infrastructure and services**

This section encompasses the following categories:

- The Australian Government needs to further invest in regional connectivity in the Basin
- Basin regions and towns facing acute social and economic issues needs immediate support

16. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the Panel's key findings and recommendations, and why? Please provide as much detail as possible.

I agree to the extent if such priority is based on impacts from the plan. Other regions have had droughts, bushfires and floods. We already see dislocation in the MDB, I am not sure we should see the Basin communities be treated a whole lot different than communities outside the Basin.

17. Are there any significant gaps? What are we missing?

18. If implemented, do you think our recommendations would make a difference or have a benefit to you and/or your community?

Yes, would help Basin Communities, but I would not like to see a big divide between them and other areas of rural Australia also experiencing similar hardship. Certainly would support greater spending in rural Australia though.