

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

### Submission Number 027

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

██████████

2. Please enter your first name

██████████

3. Please enter your email

██

### **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.

██████████ is not intending on making a detailed submissions, but strongly endorses the submissions lodged by National Irrigators Council and NSW Irrigators Council. In terms of this section ██████████ absolutely accepts that the impact of the Basin Plan, as been felt differently from community to community. What is missing, and is alluded to in your report, but could be made much more clearly is a recognition: - This reform is monumental, it shifts in a relatively short period of time 20% of the productive water pool to the environment. - Australian society, through our government, has collectively decided that this is a good thing. - However, it is critical to openly acknowledge that in fulfilling the collective wish of our society, there have been real and deep impacts, and despite efforts these impacts can never be fully mitigated. - basin communities - primarily the smaller one - are bearing a massive cost on behalf of the country. -Leadership, especially govt, must acknowledge that clearly, if trust is to have any chance of being rebuilt. With specific regard to Recommendation 5, ██████████ would be very concerned about any attempt to water down the Socio-Economic test. Projects would have to show overwhelming community support if it was to negate the test, but in reality if that level of support was there, then the project would probably pass the test anyway. ██████████ completely concurs that the current Economic development Programme has been completely inadequate, and under funded. In reality the funds allocate represent only 15 of the overall programme, and much of that money appears to have been directed to projects that were of dubious value. However, the final report should openly recognise the Economic Development Programme are extremely hard to implement, and make real differences, especially in small towns. Some towns exists these days almost solely for irrigation, you reduce the amount of water available and they will contract. They lack other compeitive advantages to make them attractive. While ensuring good services are in these communities is an essential first step, providing them is in now way a guarantee of success. If I am thinking of starting an alternative business, why would I start it in an otherwise small community, even if it has good

communication services, if I could locate in or close to a larger community. This reinforces the earlier point that no matter how hard gov't/people try, some impacts cannot be mitigated against and we need to be honest about that. to

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

I don't think you are missing much as such, but I do think we need to be really honest on calling some things.

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

I would like to think so, but it will revolve around successfully rebuilding the trust, and all player acknowledging the truth and the benefits. Splitting out as much as possible what issues are the result of drought, water reform, market reform and the Basin Plan, and acknowledging there has been benefits as well

### **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.

There is no doubt that First Nation people are disadvantaged, and they should be included in reform, [REDACTED] does believe that there should be a clear separation between cultural water and First Nation economic water,. As an industry which are confident there are ways that our industry members and First Nation people can work together.f

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?

### **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.

Please refer to NIC and NSWIC submissions, but in summary, water is the lifeblood of these communities, if you take away one drop more of water than necessary, that is one drop too much. A fundamental flaw of the Basin Plan has been its almost single focus on a "just add water approach", and much more thought needs to be given to leveraging the existing pool of

environmental water with investment in complementary measures that will enhance environmental outcomes.

11. Are there any significant gaps? What are we missing?
12. If implemented, do you think our recommendations would make a difference or have a benefit to you and/or your community?

### **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.

Better understanding of water is always desirable, however, people need to be in a mindset that they actually accept the information. There is so much misleading information out there at the moment that is getting traction, because it suits the narrative of those peddling it, and people because of a whole range of stresses, are willing to accept the message.

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?

### **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.

As mentioned earlier, infrastructure and services are a fundamental and no social/economic programme will succeed without them, but having them is no guarantee of success either.

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?

### **Additional Comments – From Email to Robbie Sefton**

In summary my key points on the report are:

- Govt, as representative of Australian society must acknowledge the magnitude of the reform, and openly acknowledge that some impacts are not able to be fully mitigated, and communities deserve the respect of society for taking that hit on behalf of the nation.

- Everyone needs to be a lot more honest. Too many people are telling a narrative that serves their purpose, and too many people are so stressed from numerous fronts, that they are receptive to the narrative that is being peddled.
- Social and Economic adjustment is important and should be expanded, but must be recognised that it is hard, history probably points to more failures than successes, and it is no silver bullet. For small water dependent communities, irrigation is their reason for being, take that away and they will fully or partially fail.
- Provisions of good services (internet) are an absolutely basic building block for modern economic development, without them there can be no development, but the provision of them does not guarantee development. Each community needs some form of advantage, and I am afraid good communication will not make you stand out from the crowd, lots of communities have it – so what is your real advantage. Fortunately or unfortunately, for many of these communities it is or was irrigation.