

Returning water to Hattah Lakes - EP 2

Owen Lloyd:

We grow grapes, dried grapes, for the Australian market. We virtually start working just after Christmas preparing for harvest then we get into harvest and you don't get a day off. It's every day all day, and there's a weather change, we stopped and what I wanted to do was to get out of the place for a while and the first thing that came into my mind was Hattah.

Sharyon Peart:

Hattah is the National Park, this area Hattah-Kulkyne National Park, and it's very important to the community because it's a beautiful serene place and it has the beautiful Hattah Lakes and, you know, the lovely park where the locals love to fish and enjoy the serenity.

Arthur Kirby:

Well Kulkyne is a very special place because it's a meeting place for all Traditional Owners in this area. They met, they gathered, they traded, and this was a great trade area for people from even as far Mt Gambier.

Owen Lloyd:

Once you come down here a few times once you go to Wallpolla, you become a convert, and you can come down here and relax completely.

Brendan Rodgers:

Well this is a park that's completely unique in this landscape. It's a dry landscape. We're in semi-arid sort of landscape so it needs water to survive.

Owen Lloyd:

I paddle up a lot of creeks and backwaters and one that stays in the back of my mind was Hattah when they first started pumping, and the water was flowing again and I thought well, it doesn't get much better than this. I think I changed my mind rather than anyone change it for me. I thought no it's too good to lose. So, therefore, I was on the positive side of it all the time. I'd seen how the gum trees or the tops of gum trees were dying and they needed something to keep them going or we weren't gonna have gum trees in Hattah National Park.

Ben Dwyer:

Natural flows into Hattah have declined over time as the amount of water we've consumed from the rivers has increased. So the big storages upstream store floods. They store the small to medium floods. And those small to medium floods that used to flow into Hattah very regularly, providing that regular top up of water, and the big floods provided that huge landscape scale flooding. All of those are reduced. So we've got less often, less volume, less area of flooding. So the works seek to address that by allowing us to manage closer to the natural regime of the extent the frequency and the duration of flooding, so we maintain those key ecological processes in the lakes.

Brendan Rodgers:

We know the water in the lakes brings people. We know that the visitation goes up 50% once the lakes have got water in them so national parks are as much about protecting the ecological values and natural values as they are being made available to the public, so the public can come here enjoy these areas. So water in the lakes certainly will do that but also it's important in protecting some of these cultural values. This is a really rich, rich area for cultural values and investing in this project will really help protect those the long term and it's really important for this area.

Arthur Kirby:

We got a bit of a scar over this tree here. Now that's a possible shield tree that when they carve it splits from the top down.

Ken Stewart:

There's a number of groups that lay claim to this area so the whole cultural area is very sensitive, there's burial sites, scar trees, we got shell middens, we got plenty around here. So there's a lot of cultural significance to area, and it's very important for the history of Indigenous people, and also for the education of the future generation.

It's about achieving things for the future, because if we don't do nothing now, what's there going to be handed down to my grandchildren and their kids? Once the park is opened back up, I'll be bringing my kids down here and my grandkids and say, this is what we've achieved.

Owen Lloyd:

This project I see as showing that we can look after the environment, and that's as far as I'll go. Not keep it as it is, but we can look after the environment.

CREDITS

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