

**Submission  
No 17**

**SUPPORT FOR DROUGHT AFFECTED COMMUNITIES IN NEW SOUTH  
WALES**

**Name:** Ms Abigail Humphreys

**Date Received:** 21 November 2019

Dear Committee,

I wish to make a submission as I was recently in Western NSW to support Traditional Owners and Aboriginal leaders who are suffering as a result of water being traded as a commodity rather than being seen as everyone's right.

The state of the Baaka River system aka Murray Darling River is a disgrace and this is completely created by poor water management. The volumes of water taken are not properly monitored and the fines are so low they do not provide any incentive to not steal water. The licences to take water when the river is low and the amount of water in private dams is an environmental catastrophe.

I believe there should be a Royal Commission to investigate where the money has gone because there has been many payments some as large as 80 million reported given out by B. Joyce when he was in charge.

The lack of water has had a terrible impact to the communities who live along the Baaka River and who depend on the River for their livelihoods as well as rest and recreation. The river is the life blood of these communities. The Aboriginal communities have been harshly affected as their Spiritual connection, Dreamtime stories are deeply associated with the creation of the Baaka River, the loss of this connection as a result of the water theft is not able to be calculated in monetary terms but must be viewed within the context of the incredibly low life expectancy of the men and women who live along the Baaka. This is genocide of a peaceful people for profit and greed.

Whilst I was out in Menindee Lake I saw rows and rows of dead grape vines amongst other produce. This was a once flourishing agricultural environment but without water the whole area is now dead.

I would like this committee to examine the water theft, and how this is impacting Indigenous and Non Indigenous communities along the rivers.

I would like you to contact people whose health have been impacted and the people whose businesses have gone broke as a result of this water theft .

I would like you to examine the volumes of water held in private dams.

Finally I would like you to make strong recommendations to have the laws changed and tightened to increase fines that truly reflect the real value of water that will act as a disincentive to these companies that are buying and selling water at huge profits.

Thank you for allowing me to make this submission.

A. Humphreys