

**IMPACTS OF THE WATER AMENDMENT (RESTORING OUR RIVERS) ACT
2023 ON NSW REGIONAL COMMUNITIES**

Organisation: Griffith City Council

Date Received: 14 April 2025



Mr Roy Butler, MP
Chair
Committee on Investment, Industry and Regional Development
Parliament House
6 Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Mr. Butler,

**SUBMISSION - INQUIRY INTO THE IMPACTS OF THE WATER AMENDMENT
(RESTORING OUR RIVERS) ACT 2023 ON NSW REGIONAL COMMUNITIES**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Committee regarding the above Inquiry.

Council comments are provided under several of the Terms of Reference below.

Terms of Reference

- a) *the social, economic and environmental impact of repealing limits to the cap on Commonwealth water purchases*

Council Comment:

Griffith City Council is totally opposed to water purchase (buy-backs) by the Australian Government in any form.

The Australian Government and State Governments have failed to implement water savings projects including infrastructure investments and removal of constraints. This failure has resulted in the Australian Government pressing forward with a policy of water purchases (buy-backs) without any regard for the future viability of regional communities.

Removing the cap on Commonwealth water purchases (buy-backs) is a short sighted, politically driven strategy that is counter-productive to Australia's future prosperity. The Australian Government is determined to diminish the productive capacity of our nation's agricultural sector and is expending hard earned tax payer funds in the process.

In order to achieve water buy-back targets by a pre-determined deadline of December 2026, the Government is offering a premium above the current water market price. The "premium margin" above market price in itself is a blatant waste of tax payer funds.

The Australian Government is exploiting vulnerable farmers. They (Australian Government) claims these farmers are "willing sellers". In many cases these farmers are in fact "desperate sellers". Commodity prices ebb and flow and when times are tough due to low commodity prices, high input costs or high interest rates, farmers will be tempted by an inflated one off offer from the Government to exit the agricultural industry.

Water buy-backs permanently removes water from productive use. This water would have generated economic return for generations to come with the flow on benefits not only to the farmer but the entire economy. Taxation revenue is also foregone intergenerationally which could have been used by the Government to provide essential services and projects to the broader community.

The Australian Government should pause any further water buy-backs and undertake comprehensive economic modelling of the cost to tax payers of the water buy-back policy against the intergenerational loss of economic growth and associated foregone taxation raised if this water remained in productive use. This proposal/request has been made to the Australian Government on several occasions without any reply.

- b) *the risks to the effective implementation of the Federal Water Amendment (Restoring Our Rivers) Act 2023 including unlicensed take of water and options to address these risks such as rules for floodplain harvesting*

Council Comment:

Nil

- c) *the impact of Planned Environmental Water rules on the reliability of water allocations in NSW and the Commonwealth's environmental water holdings*

Council Comment:

Nil

- d) *the impact of rules-based changes on the reliability of water allocations in NSW, including their impact on different water license categories*

Council Comment:

Nil

- e) *the effectiveness and impacts of past water reforms, including community-based water reduction adjustment programs such as the Strengthening Basin Communities program and Murray-Darling Basin Economic Development Program*

Council Comment:

The quantum of funds allocated by the Australian Government under these structural adjustment programs is totally inadequate. Water buy-backs claw back economic output for generations to come and the cumulative value of this lost output renders these structural adjustment programs as tokenistic or little more than "a drop in the bucket."

- f) *options to improve future community-based reduction adjustment programs including next rounds of the Sustainable Communities Program*

Council Comment:

Griffith City Council is opposed to any form of water buy-back strategy but if this does continue then the Australian Government must revisit the quantum of funds allocated under the Sustainable Communities Program. The \$300M fund as is currently allocated should be significantly increased.

Communities should have the authority and time to make their own decisions as to where the structural adjustment funds are best invested.

- g) *any other related matter.*

Council Comment:

Griffith City Council is a member of the Murray Darling Association (MDA) (Region 9) and Griffith City Council endorses the submission to this Inquiry by the Murray Darling Association.

To properly implement the Murray-Darling Basin Plan at the local level, it is essential that councils are involved in decision-making. As the peak representative body for councils within the Basin, the MDA also submits that it be afforded a seat at the table when decisions affecting the Murray-Darling Basin Plan are being made. The MDA seeks to be integrated into decision-making processes affecting the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, so that it can ensure that its member councils are properly engaged in its implementation.

Yours sincerely,



BRETT STONESTREET PSM
GENERAL MANAGER