Submission No 3

INQUIRY INTO WATER AUGMENTATION

Organisation: Broken Hill Darling River Action Group / Broken Hill Menindee lakes We Want Action Facebook Group

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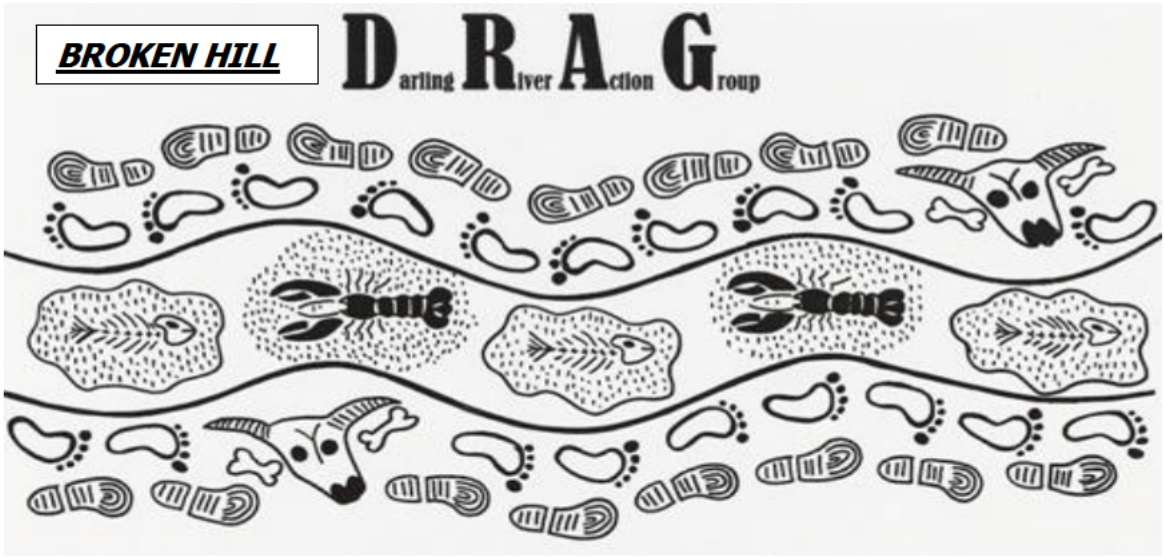

TO THE DIRECTOR

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 5
WATER AUGMENTATION (INQUIRY)
Parliament House / Macquarie St / Sydney 2000

SUBMISSION BY:

The Broken Hill Residents Association Inc. Trading as The Broken Hill and Darling River Action Group and the Broken Hill Menindee lakes We Want Action Facebook Group.
With the permission of the Executive and Members of these Groups.

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Mark Hutton

Index

(Fig 1) **The Darling River**

SUBMISSION TO THE GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No .5

1. What do we want?

We want our Domestic Water supply for Broken Hill and Menindee to continue to come from surface water out of the Menindee lakes, as we have for the past fifty years, and not from Bores, Aquifer Recharge or water piped from the Murray River. We would also like to see the Darling River, Menindee Lakes and the Great Darling Anabranch receive adequate flows from all of its tributaries so as to keep a permanent safe environmental habitat for the thousands of birds, fish and animals that inhabit this area. With a permanent water supply in the Menindee Lakes there would be no need for an alternative water supply for Broken Hill and it would save the NSW Tax payer 500 Million dollars.

We also want greater accountability of Politicians, Senior Bureaucrats and their Departments. If the people who were responsible for the draining of the Menindee lakes in 2004 were held accountable for their mismanagement then, it is possible that the environmental disaster in the lower Darling and Menindee lakes would not be happening now.

2. The Cause

Low flows in the Darling and continued mismanagement are the main cause. The MDBA in (2012/2013) and the Department of Primary Industries Water have twice in the last ten years (2003/2004 & 2012/2013) drained the Menindee Lakes without any thought to the environmental and social disaster that it would cause. The over extraction of water for flood irrigation on inappropriate crops such as cotton and rice have left this once pristine waterway nothing more than a polluted sewer. Its once mighty stands of river red gums, its fish and wildlife are being destroyed so swiftly and to such an extent that we may not be able to save them for future generations. An example of this is the Great Anabranch of the Darling which will now only see water in times of extreme flood, as normal floodwater no longer reaches the lower Darling due to the extractions for irrigation. Much has been said about the Menindee lakes, including a concerted campaign by irrigators to depict the lakes as water wasters and just evaporation pans. But the real reason for this is to deflect criticism from the real problem, and that is the huge extractions for cotton irrigation on the Darling and its tributaries. Commercial greed and political collusion have over taken common sense and responsibility.

3. Environmental Health *(Sourced From the draft basin Plan Pg 31)*

(A 2011 review by the Murray–Darling Freshwater Research Centre outlines the long-term declines in the health of the Barwon–Darling, including bank instability, reduced water quality, algal blooms and decreased river vegetation. Much of this decline has been linked to water use in the catchment, **as a result of both extraction of water from rivers and regulation by weirs**. The 2008 Sustainable Rivers Audit found the Barwon–Darling to have fish and aquatic insect, crustacean and snail populations in poor health. **It found there were fewer high flows and reduced annual volumes and variability**. CSIRO reported in 2008 that water use has nearly doubled the average and maximum periods between ecologically important flows to the Talyawalka Anabranch. Individual events are now larger on average but the total volume is lower because there are **far fewer events**. This is likely to have reduced waterbird breeding opportunities and the condition and extent of native vegetation within the Talyawalka system.)

4. Floodplain Harvesting of Water

A huge amount of water is being harvested off floodplains, depriving rivers of water. Floodplain harvesting occurs when landholders capture water that is on the floodplain and use it to irrigate crops or pasture. It includes the taking of water that has overflowed from the main river channel as well as taking local runoff that has not yet reached the river channel. It can involve the digging of channels and banks to divert water to dams. Until 2008 floodplain harvesting was not regulated and remained a major loophole within NSW water management, as it is almost always un-metered. In 2008 the NSW Government passed legislation making it illegal to build new diversion structures on floodplains without permission. The legislation did not correct the already excessive floodplain harvesting, and it is doubtful whether there are sufficient compliance officers to police the law. Floodplain harvesting is making a mockery of the Basin Plan. Water stolen from the floodplains is neither regulated, nor paid for, but it is a loss to the rivers. Cutting out floodplain harvesting is a major opportunity to return water to the rivers.

5. The Current State of the Darling River

The Darling River Basin covers 650,000 square kilometres of NSW and Queensland. As can be seen from the map below, almost all of the water in the Darling and its major tributary – the Barwon – comes from tributaries that feed into this system above Bourke. These tributaries contributed the following percentages into the Barwon Darling, prior to widespread irrigation diversions:

- Culgoa River: 15.1%
- Border Rivers: 20.9%
- Gwydir River: 12%
- Namoi River: 23.1%
- Macquarie/Bogan Rivers: 21.6%
- Rare contributions come from the Warrego River and very occasionally from the Paroo River.

(Data from the 'State of the Darling' report by Webb, McKeown & Associates Pty Ltd, 2007,*)*

Following are a few statistics from the Murray Darling Basin Commission:

- Of the water that would have reached the sea from the Murray-Darling Basin, over two-thirds is now diverted from its rivers each year. Throughout the basin, rivers are now in a state of drought for more than 61 years in every 100, compared with 5 years per 100 (Murray Darling Basin Ministerial Council 1995).

- Mean natural flows in the Darling system were 3,042 Gigalitres. Under 1993/94 conditions, this reduced to 2,272 Gigalitres – 75% of natural flows. But mean flow calculations are influenced too much by single large flows. The median flow is more informative.

- Median natural flows in the Darling system used to be 1,746 gigalitres. Under 1993/94 conditions the median flow was 1053 – only 60% of natural flows.

- Percentage increase in diversion from 1988-1994 (i.e. the increase in the amount of water being taken out of the rivers):

- NSW Border Rivers 38.2%
- Upper Darling 32.0%
- QLD Border Rivers 187.2%
- Condamine/Balonne 63.5%

Percentage change from natural flows at Wilcannia

- Change from mean flow - 29%
- Change from median flow - 73%

- Increased storages, weirs and dams, have had only limited effect on very big floods, but have virtually eliminated small to medium sized floods on most rivers in the Murray-Darling Basin. Floodplain plants, animals, and floodplain graziers, are suffering as a result.

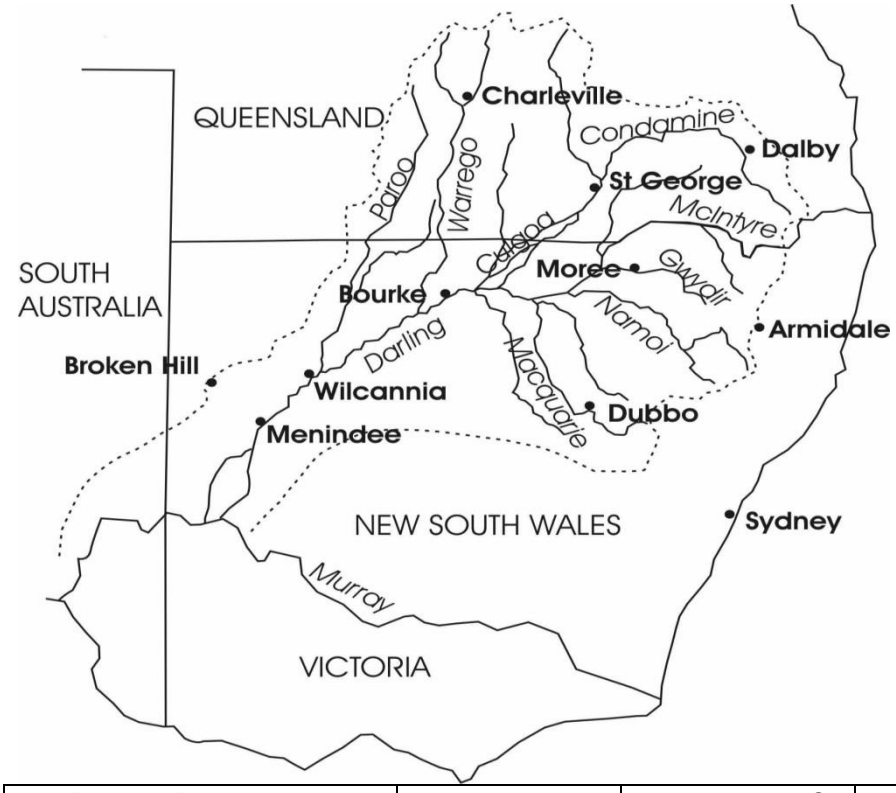
- In the whole Murray-Darling Basin, over the 4 years between 1996/7 and 2000/2001, areas of irrigated cotton expanded by 108,000 hectares (36%), and the water requirements for cotton increased by 729 Gigalitres to 2,856 Gigalitres.

6. The 2007 State of the Darling report provides some statistics:

1. Average annual runoff into rivers of the Darling Basin is about 7,000 Gigalitres
2. The major government dams on the tributaries of the Darling can hold 5,129 Gigalitres, but they normally do not. A lot of the rainfall water enters the river below these dams.
3. Total on-farm storage in the upper Darling basin is now equivalent to 60% of the total volume of the government dams.

Volumes of Storages, Total Darling Basin (Gigalitres)	
Major dams (incl Menindee Lakes)	7,179
Town water supply dams	138
Weirs	171
Ring tanks (mostly cotton farms)	3,150
Hillside dams	1,347

Since the late 1970s the contributions that the tributaries have made to the Darling River have greatly reduced. The Murray Darling Basin website states that in the 1960s diversions from the Barwon-Darling and its tributaries were 50 Gigalitres[1] and by 1991 they were 1,400 Gigalitres. This increase in diversion and extraction has continued over the last 25 years. Webb, McKeown & Associates Pty Ltd (State of the Darling report 2007) estimate that average annual runoff is about 7,000 Gigalitres, while total average annual surface water use in the Darling Basin is 3,200 Gigalitres.



Darling Tributary	Average Natural Inflow into Darling (Gigs per year)	Percentage of total natural inflows from Darling Tributaries	Current average inflow (Gigs per year)	Percent reduction in inflow into the Darling
Border Rivers	862	20.9 %	574	33 %
Gwydir River	493	12 %	196	60 %
Namoi River	949	23.1 %	779	18 %
Condamine/Balonne/Culgoa	621	15.1 %	293	53 %
Macquarie/Bogan Rivers	888	21.6 %	634	29 %

The Murray Darling Basin Commission website (2007) further states that the diversions have been **"primarily due to the expansion of the cotton industry and the use by growers of large on-farm water storage."**

Communities and graziers that live along the Darling River have witnessed a severe ecological decline of the river system over the last 20-30 years. The river no longer receives the intermittent flooding that the river, associated wetlands and the floodplains depend on. Flooding that does occur is greatly reduced in duration. Some of the environmental impacts are:

- Large numbers of river red gums (some hundreds of years old) and other perennial shrubs are dying. There have been large areas of perennial shrubs dying and on both the floodplain and the river banks there are large numbers of trees dying as well. The saddest part of this is that over the past 15 years, there has been enough water in the river system to maintain environmental health but it never got here because it disappeared upstream for irrigation.

- Migratory and non-migratory birds are losing breeding grounds vital to their continued existence. Two examples of this are the drying and destruction of the Macquarie Marshes and Gwydir Wetlands. (Professor Richard Kingsford University of New South Wales, Sunday Telegraph 19.6.2005).
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- Murray Cod and other aquatic species are under threat not only from lack of water, but also due to blue green algae in the remaining pools. Toxic flows of water killed large numbers of fish in 2004.

- Bank slumping has occurred; this happens when the riverbanks are saturated by a high flow, and the water levels drop rapidly due to pumping for irrigation. Sections of the soggy banks slide into the river. This changes the profile of channels, leads to siltation and can cause diversion of channels.

- A pipeline has replaced the Great Darling Anabranch, with enormous impacts on the riverine environment in that area.

- Irrigation businesses that are downstream from the big users are finding that their investments are no longer viable. Permanent crops are dead or dying

Figures from the report: State of the Darling, interim hydrology report, by Webb, McKeown & Associates Pty Ltd, released by the Murray Darling Basin Commission in 2007.

7. Water Account Australia 2008–09 Murray-Darling Basin

- Water consumption in the Murray-Darling Basin in 2008–09, amounted to 6,152 GL or 44% of total water consumption in Australia. This compared to 9,668 GL in 2004–05 or a decrease of 36%.
- The Agriculture industry in the Murray-Darling Basin consumed 3,843 GL or 55%, of the total volume consumed by agriculture for Australia.
- This gross value of irrigated agricultural production in the Murray-Darling Basin declined by 21% from $5,522 million in 2005-06 to $4,349 million in 2008–09. The 2008–09 value represents 36% of the total gross value of irrigated agricultural production in Australia.
- Household consumption of water was 190 GL in 2008–09, or 3% of total water consumption. Household water consumption in the Murray-Darling Basin is virtually unchanged since 2004–05 (189 GL).
- Household water use per capita was 89 kL, a decrease from 94 kL per capita in 2004–05.
- Water losses in the distribution process amounted to 1,630 GL or 17% of distributed water supply for the Murray-Darling Basin.
- The Electricity and Gas Supply industry consumed only 847 ML of water in the Murray-Darling Basin in 2008–09. In-stream use of water, mostly for hydro-electricity in the Electricity and Gas Supply industry was 9,169 GL, representing 21% of the Australian total in-stream water use in this industry.

(Fig:2) The Darling River

8. The Effect Our Communities

The health of our communities has detiorated and One in five children or even lower aged under five in Broken Hill have blood lead levels above the current national goal of five micrograms per deciliter (μg/dL). Adult lead levels are also high. But with Level three water restrictions. Basically we can only water our lawns and gardens twice a week for a couple of hours with no washing of paths or driveways. This is also the case for local parks and sporting ovals. Large amounts of lead contaminated dust have now accumulated on and around private housing and public amenities. Skin rashes on our children due to the filthy quality of water that is left in our weir pools. Farmers in Menindee and the Lower Darling have lost not only income but most of their permanent plantings. Millions of dollars in tourism have been lost in Broken Hill and Menindee because campers won't come to an area where they can't swim or even eat the fish they catch. In our harsh outback environment clean fresh water is essential for our wildlife, towns, cities and industries. The Darling River, Menindee Lakes, Great Darling Anabranch and its catchments are the lifeblood of the Far West and our communities depend on them for our very survival.

(Fig 3) Camping on the Darling River

9. The Effect on our Environment

The Menindee lakes, Darling River and Great Darling Anabranch provide habitat for large populations birds, fish and animals that rely on their waters for survival. ***Quote from DPI Water Resources and Management Overview / Lower Darling River Catchment*** (There are 46 threatened animal species and 14 threatened plant species within the region that are protected under the ***NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995***. Ten of the threatened plant species are listed as endangered, and include species of saltbush, bluebush, native daisy and acacia.
Of the 27 threatened bird species that use the area the majority inhabit the woodland and sand plain habitats along and beyond the river. Species listed as endangered include the bush stone-curlew, malleefowl, Australian bustard, plains wanderer and regent parrot. Blue-billed duck and freckled duck are regular visitors to the Darling Anabranch lakes.
The region provides habitat for 13 threatened mammals including critically endangered species such as Gould's mouse, Mitchell's hopping mouse, numbat, pig-footed bandicoot and burrowing bettong. Five species of threatened lizards and one frog species (painted burrowing frog) are also found in the Lower Darling.
There are at least six native fish species known to live in the Lower Darling River, these being western carp gudgeon, golden perch, bony bream, Murray cod, crimson-spotted rainbow fish and Australian smelt (Green *et al.* 1998). Six other species that were previously common along the Lower Murray-Darling Rivers are now listed as threatened under the *NSW Fisheries Management Act 1994*. (Table 2).
The aquatic community of the Lower Darling River is part of the endangered ecological community known as the *Aquatic ecological community in the natural drainage system of the lowland catchment of the Darling River.* This includes 21 native fish species and hundreds of native invertebrate species that are found within the Darling River and its associated streams, wetlands and anabranches within New South Wales, including the Lower Darling and Great Darling Anabranch.)

Table 2: Threatened aquatic species of the Lower Darling River Scientific name	**Common name**	**Status in NSW**
Craterocephalus fluviatilis	Murray hardyhead	Critically endangered
Maccullochella macquariensis	Trout cod	Endangered
Notopala sublineata	River snail	Endangered
Bidyanus bidyanus	Silver perch	Vulnerable
Nannoperca australis	Southern pygmy perch	Endangered
Mogurnda adspersa	Purple spotted gudgeon	Endangered
Aquatic ecological community in the natural drainage system of the lowland catchment of the Darling River	Darling River EEC	Endangered Ecological Community

10. The Effect on Indigenous Tribes of the Darling River

Significant numbers of Aboriginal people reside in the river towns of Brewarrina, Bourke Wilcannia, Menindee and Wentworth. Broken Hill is home to the largest single population of Aboriginal people. There are 45,000 Aboriginal people in the Western Division or 24.4 per cent ofr the population. The Barwon-Darling Rivers (BDR) and the Menindee Lakes System (MLS), have been central to the life, livelihood, culture, mythology and Dreaming of we Aboriginal people of the far-west and north-west of NSW since time immemorial. We are freshwater people. As a people who relied on limited food resources (particularly during drought and summer months) the BDR and MLS were and are an essential lifeblood.

It saddens us to see the BDR and MLS in such a state. We hurt not only for the riverine species that have died and continue to die, but we also lament the impact the lack of water has on the surrounding vegetation and animal species.
In our culture, surrounding the central-Darling, our totem animals are freshwater species (eg. Golden Perch and Bony-Bream fish), but also others such as Wood-Duck and Teal Duck that more indirectly rely on the water, to name but a few.
In traditional Aboriginal culture, we had individual and collective responsibilities, to ensure the survival of totemic animals, by limiting the number of animals that we hunted. We did not hunt these animals during their breeding cycles, to ensure the continuation of their species, and we performed increase ceremonies to make more of them available to nature and to us for our subsistence.
In fact, the very essence of our culture, is based on the division of society between those who are Eagle and those who are Crow. One who is of the Eagle moiety can only marry someone from the opposite Crow moiety, and vise versa, this system is also described as being East wind and West wind.
This communique is not intended to be a lesson in Aboriginal culture, rather, it is intended to describe and explain the absolute essence of the survival, of many native species to our culture. We have lost almost all of our ceremonies, but our language and cultural knowledge has not disappeared.
Many of our communities have appalling levels of unemployment with many eking out an existence on the bottom rung of the socio-economic ladder. Those in receipt of Social Security benefits are ashamedly high (shame on you, the NSW and Australian Governments). The importance of these freshwater bodies, to supplement our diets with freshwater fish, mussels, yabbies and turtles (etc.), is essential to maintaining physical health, and more importantly to vary a diet which is too often laden with cheaper take-away foods and not enough fresh food. The clear majority of our communities have a clear lack of social infrastructure, so the ability to wile away the hours fishing and yabbying is an important social pastime. It is a time for family to get together in a healthy environment. It is a time to get away from the myriad of television, computer and game screens which dominate our lives and soak up some Vitamin D. It is a time for children to swim, run and play. It is a time to reconnect with extended family members and other community members in general. It is also a time to talk to children and young family members about the importance of conservation, and only taking from nature that which is needed. When the rivers and lakes are healthy we are happy and healthier.

(Fig 4) The Darling River

(Fig 5 Lake Menindee)

11. Background

Under current rules the lakes are in NSW control until the stored water exceeds 680 GL. Then the MDBA takes over, and the water belongs 50:50 to NSW and Victoria. If the South Australians ask for water, it will be released from Menindee Lakes rather than from the dams on the Murray.

When the volume of water stored in the lakes drops below 480 GL, control reverts to NSW. When the MDBA makes a release, they will release 9 or 10 GL per day, to minimise losses as the water flows to South Australia. Presently Lake Menindee can only release 4 GL per day and Lake Cawndilla can only release 2 GL per day. That means water has to be released from the upper lakes.

By the time the total volume reduces to 480 GL, most of that is left in residual pools in Lakes Menindee, Cawndilla, and Pamamaroo, out of reach for water supplies and evaporating at a high rate.

12. Climate Change and Irrigation Extractions – Reduced Flow

A lot of the talk about Menindee Lakes is based on the past, when the lakes were filled most of the time. Irrigators talk about evaporation losses of 400 GL per year at Menindee. All of this is out of date. The extractions have increased enormously upstream, and the climate is changing... Any changes that are made to Lakes Menindee and Cawndilla will only have benefits when there is water in the lakes. And how often will that be? Our guess is that both lakes will fill about once in 10 years.

13. Our Proposal

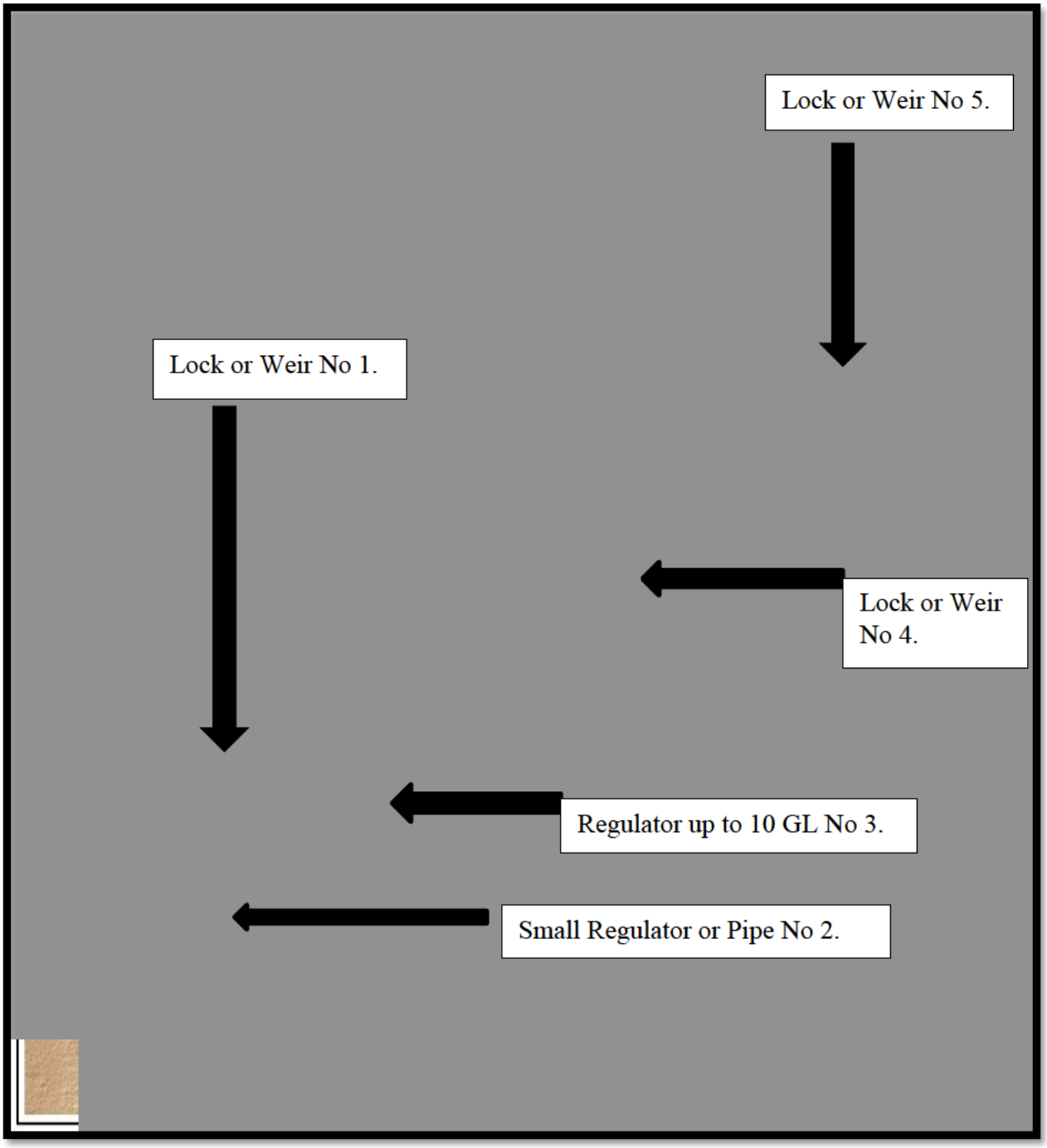
1. **A low level regulator near Morton Boolka between Menindee Lake and Cawndilla Lake to raise the level of Lake Menindee before it overflows into Lake Cawndilla. The regulator would work both ways if Cawndilla was full. Cawndilla would back flow into Menindee Lake. (*see Fig 6. No 1.*)**
2. **There may need to be a small regulator at the lower end of Cawndilla Creek, in order to fill Eurobilli Lake, for environmental and cultural purposes. (*see Fig 6. No 2.*)**
3. **Replace the existing Lake Menindee outlet regulator with a regulator that can handle 10 GL per day. (*see Fig 6. No 3.*)**
4. **A channel about 50-100m long to carry water directly from the Menindee outlet, into the Darling. This is because Menindee Creek can only handle 5 GL per day. The new channel would be at a high level, and would need a footbridge for access to a culturally sensitive area. (*see Fig 6.*)**
5. **Deepen Menindee Creek within Lake Menindee, to access the residual pool.**
6. **It would also be useful to put a regulator between Lake Tandure and Lake Wetherell. The water captured in Lake Tandure could be used to feed the Anabranch or a backup domestic supply for Broken Hill, Menindee and Sunset Strip). This is an incredibly underutilised Lake. (*See Fig 6. No 4.*)**
7. **The raising of the 480 GL trigger point to a minimum of 600GL so that more water can be stored for longer in the upper lakes.**
8. **Raising the height of weir 32 so as to hold more water in the weir pool.**
9. **The construction of a new pipeline from the Menindee Weir pool to Broken Hill**
10. **The construction of a Lock above the influence of Lake wetherall. This would hold water almost halfway back to Wilcannia. (*see Fig 6. No 5.*)**

Any or all of these suggestions would greatly enhance the holding capacity and efficiency of the Menindee Lakes System there by allowing better structured releases to the lower Darling and Murray Rivers. They would also assure a permanent and quality water supply for Broken Hill, Menindee and Sunset Strip.

14. Costs

The costs of the structures and earthworks in this proposal are relatively low, especially compared with the 500 million the current NSW Government seems intent on spending on a Bore field or a Murray pipeline as an alternative water supply for Broken Hill, Menindee and Sunset Strip.

(Fig 6)



15. Evaporation Savings

With these proposals any water that flows into Lake Menindee, up to the level of the new regulator near Morten Boolka, can be recovered. (Although there might still be a small residual pool.)

When Lakes Pamamaroo and Wetherell are full, and water flows into Lake Menindee, the MDBA takes control. With the new Lake Menindee outlet, they can release water from Lake Menindee, only, then take water off the floodplain in Lake Wetherell (something that is being done now for environmental purposes), and if necessary out of Lake Tandure. When the lakes return to NSW control there will still be a lot of water in Lake Pamamaroo.The evaporation savings are equal to the volume of the present residual pool in Lake Menindee (about 100 GL),

plus the water that would have spilled into Lake Cawndilla up to the level of the Cawndilla residual pool (up to about 100 GL). There will also be evaporation savings by quicker draw downs. The overall effect is that the water that is now left in 3 residual pools will in future be kept in Lake Pamamaroo, where it is accessible and will maintain better quality. The construction of a Lock or Weir above the influence of Lake Wetherall could hold water back for a considerable distance in the darling and become a valuable extra resource in times of low flows or drought. It would also have much lower evaporation rates than on farm storages..

16. Effects on Lake Cawndilla

Lake Cawndilla will not fill as often. But with the current up-river extractions and climate change, it may fill rarely anyway. Otherwise, Lake Cawndilla is left as it is. The outlet regulator on Lake Cawndilla only handles 2 GL per day, and that is all the channels to the Darling and to the Anabranch can handle. This outlet can be used by the MDBA when Lake Cawndilla is full. If Lake Cawndilla fills, its water can be used as it is at present. There will be a residual pool, and that can just stay there for the flora and fauna until it evaporates. It has an environmental function, so is not wasted.

17. Delivering Water to the Anabranch and Tandou

With the new pipeline to the Anabranch properties, there is still an acknowledged responsibility to run environmental flows down the Anabranch from time to time. There are two ways those flows can occur: either from Lake Cawndilla, or from overflow from the Darling River between Willotia and Karoola properties. Overflow into the Anabranch only occurs when the Darling is flowing at greater than 10 GL per day. realistically, to get any decent flow in the Anabranch, the Darling needs to be flowing at about 12 GL per day, for some time.
If Lake Cawndilla fills, there is no problem. When it does not, the best chance for the Anabranch is to piggyback on an MDBA flow down the Darling. The MDBA can release 10 GL per day from the new outlet in Lake Menindee, and at the same time take 2 GL per day off the Lake Wetherell floodplain, or out of Lake Tandure, or if necessary out of Lake Pamamaroo. That extra 2 GL would flow down the Anabranch.
The Tandou operation at Lake Tandou can either take its water from Lake Cawndilla, pump it from the Darling, or capture it from the Darling during high flows.

18. Effects on Sunset Strip

Under this proposal Lake Menindee will hold water more often than it does under current arrangements. It will also be emptied more quickly. But water sometimes is better than water virtually never.
A major benefit is that Lakes Pamamaroo, Wetherall and Copi Hollow will be full more often, and those lakes are only a small distance from Sunset Strip.

(Fig 7) Sunset strip At Menindee Lake

(Fig: 8)

Menindee Lakes Storage Details Storage	Full Supply Level (m)	Full Supply Capacity (ML)
Lake Wetherell *(Including* lakes *Tandure, Bijijie, Balaka and Malta)*	**61.67**	**192,621**
Lake Pamamaroo *(Including Copi Hollow)*	**60.45**	**277,725**
Lake Menindee *(including Lake Speculation)*	**59.84**	**629,488**
Lake Cawndilla (*including Lake Spectacle, Morten Boolka, Cawndilla Creek & Lake Eurobilli)*	**59.84**	**631,052**
Combined Menindee		**1,730,886**

19. Benefits

- Major evaporation savings estimated of 300 to 400 GL
- Increased water security and quality for Broken Hill, Menindee and Sunset Strip
- A mechanism to get water down the Anabranch
- No expensive, expensive-to-maintain, Pipeline
- No expensive to maintain bores or RO plants
- Improvement in outlook for Sunset Strip
- A major increase in tourism potential especially Eco Tourism
- The return of a healthy river and lakes environment

(Fig 9) Lake Pamamaroo

20. Conclusion

Ladies and gentlemen this is not rocket science and not overly expensive. It is the political will that is missing and the courage to make a decision and follow it through. It would seem that over the past 15 years there has been a concerted effort by upstream Businesses, Irrigation Lobbies and Government agencies to decommission the Menindee lakes and keep as much water upstream of Bourke as possible. This will not be tolerated by people living along the lower Darling. Water flowing in our Rivers and lakes is not a commodity purely for commercial gain. Healthy Rivers and lakes are far more valuable to this Country than any crop and the health of these river and lake systems should be put ahead of all other considerations.

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DPI Water

Australian Bureau of Statisics