

## **INQUIRY INTO WATER AUGMENTATION**

**Name:** Mr Brian Gillespie

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- 6th May 2016

Chairman

The Hon. Robert Leslie Brown  
Legislative Council General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5  
Parliament House  
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Chairman

**Inquiry into water augmentation in Rural and Regional  
NSW**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry.

My name is Robert Brian Gillespie.

I live in Broken Hill NSW and have done for 58 years.

Much of my life has been spent Camping, fishing and enjoying the wonderful environment and diversified wildlife along the Darling river and around the Menindee Lakes.

Many of my friends are farmers & landholders who rely on the Darling river and the Menindee lakes for their livelihood, some now forced out of their table grape business due to lack of water.

It really pains me to see the way in which this unique wetland area is being destroyed by government agencies who appear to have little regard for the Darling river and its wetlands between Bourke NSW and Wentworth NSW.

December 2013

- Menindee Lakes Scheme was at 55% capacity (upper lakes surcharged)
- Lake Victoria was at 88% capacity, Lake Alexandrina & Lake Albert were full
- The Murray river had excellent flows
- Swamp areas along the Murray river in South Australia had water

Having full knowledge of the protracted drought in the upper catchments of the Darling River, and forecasts suggesting no inflows to the Darling River system were likely to occur, a decision was taken by the Murray Darling Basin Authority the release large volumes of water from the Menindee lakes for environmental use in the Murray river, Lower Lakes and Coorong, sacrificing environment of the Darling & Menindee Lakes.

This is the second time since 2000 that this has occurred, and the third time the Darling river has ceased to flow below Menindee. The Darling had not had a cease to flow event prior to this since 1946.

This water, approx 1000GL would have served the demands of Broken Hill and kept the lower Darling flowing for several years. I know this from experience as I have lived around the river for 58 years and have seen floods and droughts many times.

Adding to this ill advised draining of the Menindee lakes, we have a problem with water sharing rules being ignored by the NSW government and their agencies by consistently allowing irrigators in the northern basin access to supplementary flows.

These small to medium flows keep the river wet, keep weir pools full & fresh for towns like Tilpa, Louth, Wilcannia and provide water to the Menindee Lakes for supply to Broken Hill and the lower Darling river.

I believe that water trading, particularly from one valley to another is unsustainable and has created a culture of accepted over extraction in the northern basin.

My recommendations to this enquiry are listed below:

Scrap the Murray Darling Basin Plan and start again with proper investigation and consultation with affected people.

Adjust the trigger points for control of water stored in the Menindee Lakes currently known as the 480/680 rule so that the MDBA cannot access water from Menindee should the storage fall below 600GL.

Enforce water sharing rules in NSW and Queensland to ensure that small and medium flows have the opportunity to flow the length of the Darling River.

Look into the effects of water trading, and ideally prevent trading to upstream areas and definitely outlaw inter-valley trading of water entitlements.

We MUST ensure that rapid drawdown of the Menindee Lakes, as occurred in 2013-2014 never happen again. This was a national disaster and viewed by many as environmental vandalism.

This enquiry has the opportunity to undo many mistakes made and clarify many incorrect assumptions being made by Government and water management authorities.

I trust that my submission is of assistance in this process.

Yours Sincerely

Robert Brian Gillespie.