

## **INQUIRY INTO WATER AUGMENTATION**

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To start my submission I would like to remind you that the MDBA in the early stages of its gestation stated that the management of water resources must be done in a way that optimises economic, social and environmental outcomes and then stated that no society can wantonly destroy the balance between social, economic and environmental outcomes.

After the authority was formed the thinking changed and it was stated that the water reforms in the basin have never been about setting fixed proportions for the various users of water but to make sure enough water is left in the rivers to support the many different needs of communities and industries including things like fishing tourism and recreation ( irrigators have no objection to people using their water for fishing tourism and recreation while it is in transit ) and to maintain a healthy environment, this is impossible when the MDBA guidelines for an unhealthy river are an absence of invertebrates and the presence of carp.

122 sites across the basin were assessed by Independent Experts and as a result when the needs of the sites in the lower Murray Darling are met there has to be water going to S.A sufficient to give irrigators in S.A 100% allocation every year. However to combat this problem the Commonwealth Government is focused on providing infrastructure, surely this should be done first.

I can't believe that NSW irrigators have restrictions ranging from 8 to 20% while S.A irrigators have had 100% allocations for the past four years. The MDBA claims that 41% of available water is being extracted and they want to reduce this to 33% once again the work of Independent Experts.

There does not appear to be any mention of how the water to the 122 sites is being allocated, do these sites get their full allocation when there is not a full allocation for irrigation supply ? Can the authority put the criteria for the choice of the 122 sites on their website or do we just trust the independent experts.

I will finish with a story of the Macquarie marshes. In the spring of 2013 the level of Burrendong dam was dropped from 10% above the spillway to 70% below the spillway over a six week period, I believe the reason was that an environmental adviser for NPWS thought it was a good idea and then the other rationale " it is their water they can do what they like with it ". The official size of the Macquarie marshes is 20,000 hectares and yet with channels and diversion banks at least 100,000 hectares of cattle country receive FREE water while irrigators pay \$3.55/megalitre for all their entitlement and \$8.55/megalitre for any water which they use for irrigation and now receive only 16% of their entitlement in other words an irrigator with a 1000 megalitre licence receives 180 megalitre per year on average.

Is the environment better for this incredible waste of money? Who knows? And yet good for the environment is the go to phrase for greens and politicians. The time has come to have a standard method to quantify what the good is.