

Submission
No 82

INQUIRY INTO WATER AUGMENTATION

Organisation: South West Anglers Association Inc.

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SOUTH WEST ANGLERS ASSOCIATION INC.

Incorporating Angling Clubs of the Riverina District of New South Wales



Inquiry into the augmentation of water supply for rural and regional NSW.
14th August 2016

The South West Anglers Association Inc. (SWAA) would welcome the opportunity to comment on some issues relevant to the inquiry.

SWAA is an association of recreational fishing clubs in the Riverina and south west regions of NSW as well as clubs in the northern areas of Victoria.

While the association has the majority of members that are resident in the communities of the southern Murray Darling Basin with many of those directly involved in the irrigation or associated industries, we as a fishing group would like to limit our comments to what we believe are fishing related topics.

COLD WATER POLLUTION

We believe that one of the most important factors of water management that is impacting on our native fish is the releases of cold water from our dams and weirs.

This thermal pollution is not only impacting on the breeding, growth and development of the fish themselves but also on the structure of the food chain that supports these populations.

Further to that is the pilot study of Golden Perch in the Edward-Wakool system that suggests that 2/3 Golden Perch in that waterway were in fact born in the Darling River. While more research is required to establish the reasons, this Association is of the firm belief that the temperature of water delivered to that area from Lake Hume and Lake Dartmouth would play a major part in preventing the breeding of the Golden Perch upstream of the Edward-Wakool system.

The temperature control curtain that was installed at Lake Burrendong and completed in 2014 has in that very short time displayed significant improvements in the size and activity of native fish in the areas directly downstream of the Lake.

The project cost of less than \$4m is a relatively small investment in the health of the Macquarie River and should be seen as an indicator of what should occur in all of the major dams in the state.

The Hume to the Sea Fishway Project has delivered huge benefits to the native fishery (without that project the Golden Perch could not even get from the Darling to The Edward Wakool) and we firmly believe that the next step in repairing the damage that impoundments' have done to the native fishery is to address the temperature of water releases and restore some normality to the stream flow.

ENVIRONMENTAL WATER

The other factor of water management that concerns us is the timing and duration of the so called environmental flows.

Our question is, what is an environmental flow?

Our belief is that an environmental flow should wherever possible mimic a natural flow in the river.

As frequent river users our observations of these flows suggest that the timing and duration of the flows is more dependent on the need to meet targets and deliver quantities of water to certain destinations than it is to match the natural rises and falls of an unregulated river. While we appreciate that it is difficult to deliver to both to the irrigation industry and the needs of our native fish, we do believe that in the past efforts to address both targets have been very poor and far greater efforts to equally address both requirements should be very high on the agenda going forward.

Recent fish kills that were due to “black water events” were the result of poorly managed water releases that could have been prevented.

WATER STORAGE.

With the ever increasing population and the additional needs for water it is time to investigate the need for greater water storage. The size and locations of these storages would need to be extensively researched to have minimal impact on the natural environment as well as taking advantage of, and storing the excess water that has resulted in major flooding in recent times. Dams would need to be constructed in a manner that would not have the adverse impacts of previous construction methods however it is our belief that all the boxes could be ticked if we had the Government and the water managers with the courage to progress some worthwhile projects without continually bowing to the demands of the extremists that would deny this country the opportunity to progress.

Native fish are a great barometer of the health of our rivers, and while there are many initiatives that have shown benefit in the immediate past there is still vast room for improvement.

Yours sincerely,

Terry Maloney. for South West Anglers Association Incorporated.