

**Submission
No 99**

INQUIRY INTO WATER AUGMENTATION

Name: Mr Neil Gorey
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To the Standing Committee

The serious flooding which is now occurring in the area around Moulamein does highlight continual concerns over how our water resources are managed.

In particular with the majority of water being held in both Hume and Dartmouth dam and the restrictions placed on the Murray river downstream at the Barmah Choke during floods there is potential for third party damage in the Edward Wakool river system. The Barmah choke has a capacity of 8000 megs per day which places huge limitations on the system when water needs to be released from the Hume dam as is the case now.

It is also worth noting that in recent years that the capacity of the Barmah Choke has reduced as a result of the unnatural flows that the Murray river has endured.

The consequence for the system with the constraints of the Barmah Choke is that flows above 8000 megs per day are pushed out through the Edwards river which is now experiencing flood levels not seen since 1974. With this the Edwards river is seen as an option in bypassing the Barmah Choke. The flooding will cause huge economic loss to many farmers in the region with large tracts of farmland being under water. This cost includes the loss of many cereal crops and many areas which were to be planted to summer crops now unusable. With the need to evacuate Moulamein it has also cause economic loss and social disruption to the town.

Although it could be argued that this is a natural event many farmers are saying that the flows are not behaving as predicted and are the flood levels are much higher than what should have been expected.

The bottom line here is that with more and more of our water resource being held to deliver unquantifiable benefits at the bottom end of the system our local community are bearing more and more of the risk when large releases of water are needed.

In a similar way our local rivers and farmers suffered during the millennium drought at which time the Darling river was unable to supply the needs of South Australia. This water had to be supplied out of the Murray storages and with the constraints of the Barmah Choke the Edwards river was used to bypass the Choke. The water was delivered during February which from an environmental aspect was totally unjustifiable. This delivery of water caused significant damage to the river banks through subsidence and loss of trees as well as damaging pump sites and stranding livestock.

The issue of Blackwater which can lead to fish kills is an issue which needs greater consideration and understanding. With the management of our State forests and National Parks favouring a higher mass per hectare of both trees and dry matter this has created a situation where now any flooding is likely to create a blackwater event. With the floods occurring in our area at present fish kills have been observed in the Wakool river.

Our agencies in dealing with these many issues need to be more attuned to local experience and knowledge. "Citizen Science" has a lot to offer and by working with local communities there is much greater opportunity to gain both environmental and economic benefits to our region.

Regards Neil Gorey

Former Mayor Wakool Shire