

INQUIRY INTO FLOODPLAIN HARVESTING

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I'm going to keep this relatively short and to the point, the water mismanagement in this country, particularly in the Murray-Darling Basin is appalling. Water should not be a commodity because it is essential to life. It is the reason there is life on this planet, and it should not be able to be traded and sold in the manner that it currently is.

It is very clear to me that the Murray-Darling Basin is dying, and it is not because of a lack of rain due to climate change. Such a large water system has the ability to withstand drought periods, and its ability to do so is what has kept this amazing continent so full of life for tens, if not hundreds of thousands of years. The climate has only been stable in the last 11000 years (approximately) in the Holocene period, but the Murray-Darling has been here a lot longer. Throughout this time, it has maintained water flow throughout its system, keeping the continent alive. It is very clear that there should be more water flowing, despite whatever drought conditions it is being subject to, and the above ground storage of water (particularly for cotton) is causing the lack of water.

Whether the water is being stored legally or illegally through floodplain harvesting, what really matters is that it is killing the basin and with it goes our: biodiversity, food security, indigenous communities, river towns, strong economy and eventually everyone. Whilst I do believe there is an element of corruption driving excessive floodplain harvesting that I would like to see brought to light, the main outcome is that FAR more water needs to be flowing through the rivers and creeks and the amount of stored water needs to reduce SIGNIFICANTLY and IMMEDIATELY.

The Murray-Darling is integral in preventing bushfires by keeping the land moist and not ready to spark at any given second. It keeps our wildlife in abundance, by providing habitat for aquatic ecosystems and keeping the soil healthy; allowing vegetation to grow thus providing food and habitat for our iconic land animals. It is the backbone of our agriculture, allowing farmers to sustainably irrigate using water from the rivers. It is the lifeblood of so many river towns and indigenous communities who rely on it for food and water, and historical and spiritual importance to their different cultures.

Cotton can't be grown in Australia in such vast quantities. It requires more water than our country can provide. And if this industry continues to grow, and the water continues to be taken out of our Murray-Darling at its current rate, causing all of the aforementioned critical functions to disappear, our great country as we know it will die.