

**Submission
No 153**

INQUIRY INTO FLOODPLAIN HARVESTING

Name: Mr Declan Caruso

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Hello there, and thank you for taking the time to read my submission. While my submission has no evidential claims, and is comprised only of anecdotal evidence, I believe my story will touch points that many who suffer from floodplain harvesting's effects will know intimately.

I grew up in Dalby, QLD, a town of 17k residents three and a half hours west of Brisbane. Dalby is in many ways a fortunate town, sporting seven schools (three of which have boarding facilities), and great infrastructure of a town of its size. While its access to healthcare facilities - particularly emergency facilities - is not as strong as other regional towns, it boasts a fair sight more than towns even an hour west of the area.

Dalby is home to many large industries, most prominently mining/manufacturing businesses and cotton farming. Dalby boasts some of the largest cotton farming facilities in the Darling Downs, and benefits greatly from being so far upstream on the Murray-Darling river. Many farms in the area have dam facilities that draw water from the Murray-Darling, and like many in Northern NSW, were regularly full of water despite the wider area at times suffering drought-like conditions.

Of course this brought much prosperity to Dalby, as the money brought by cotton and other industries funded many of the philanthropic ventures that make the town's infrastructure as strong as it is today. I know from first-hand experience the benefits that can be brought to a town due to the economic scenario of floodplain harvesting.

However, the practise also has two adverse effects. Those downstream of the Murray-Darling do not receive such great local and state financial assistance. They suffer at the hands of blue-green algae which is proven by UK studies to be linked to various health risks including motor-neuron diseases. Southern towns suffer worse fates during drought conditions, as they must have water shipped to them not by government - particularly Nationals state members, who fear that kind of support will implicate them in causing the town's plight by allowing such immoral practises like floodplain harvesting - but by charitable donations by other communities and city centres.

This is set against the backdrop of water regulators and traders who treat the resource like a currency. This is especially true of foreign-owned water flowing through the Murray-Darling, who overwhelmingly pay no tax on their investments and thus do not contribute to fixing the issues caused by their greed.

The practise of flood-plain harvesting must be better regulated, if not outright abolished. Its profiteers are enabled by successive Nationals members who care little for the fates of their communities. While not currently illegal in the legislative sense, it is certainly immoral and perhaps deserves reclassification in our legal system. Our communities deserve better than to be mined for their natural water resources, particularly as the adverse effects of climate change begin to ramp up.