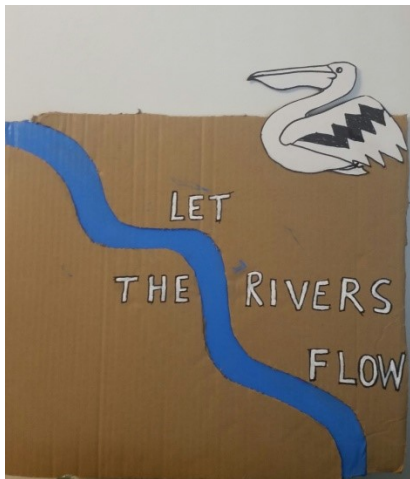


**Submission
No 233**

INQUIRY INTO FLOODPLAIN HARVESTING

Name: Ms Bronwyn Vost

Date Received: 12 August 2021



As an older Australian who has spent many years living at Leeton near the Murrumbidgee River and at Broken Hill near the Darling River and Menindee lakes, I have a deep concern for the health of the Murray –Darling River system.

Floodplain harvesting was mentioned as a contributing factor to the Menindee fish kills in the Independent assessment of the 2018-19 fish deaths in the lower Darling (Vertessy report) and the SA Royal Commission into water management in the Murray Darling Basin. FPH was identified as a factor to the Barwon-Darling River being called an ecosystem in crisis in the Natural Resources Commission review of the Barwon Darling Water Sharing Plan in 2019.



To comment on the tragedy of mass fish kills caused by flood plain harvesting, I and other Knitting Nannas made a giant Murray Cod for the parade at the Tamworth Country Music Festival in 2020.

The significant and increasing impact that FPH has had on downstream environments, First Nations communities and critical human need requirements must be assessed before the hand out of several billions of dollars of tradable, compensable, mortgageable property rights in the form of FPH licences. As the Environmental Defenders Office and the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists recently published "...conferring permanent property rights to irrigators is a windfall transfer of public wealth that should be considered only once public good outcomes can be guaranteed."

There is simply not enough water in the MDB system to allow floods to be trapped at the Northern end. In December 2020 the Barwon-Darling Rivers ceased to flow at Brewarrina and Bourke.

Substantive volumes taken by FPH in Feb and March 2020 played a part in the rivers having little resilience in warm dry times. Overland flows in the Northern NSW Murray Darling Basin from December 2020 to 30 June 2021 must be allowed to pass for the sake of the Ramsar wetlands, aquifers, First Nations communities and cultural values, struggling native fish populations, stock and domestic needs and critical human need.



The long-term ramifications of this environmental crisis are extremely concerning to me. The consequences it will have on our nation, include declining fresh water availability, food production and irreversible damage to the landscape. I believe that an independent Federal Royal Commission into mis-management of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and water theft by large corporate irrigators should be called. In the meantime, the NSW Parliament should immediately ban flood plain harvesting.