

IN-CAMERA PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

SELECT COMMITTEE ON FLOODPLAIN HARVESTING

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FLOODPLAIN HARVESTING

CORRECTED

At , Via Video conference, Sydney on Thursday, 7 October 2021

The Committee met in camera at 1:30 pm

PRESENT

Ms Cate Faehrmann (Chair)
The Hon. Mark Banasiak (Deputy Chair)
The Hon. Lou Amato
The Hon. Sam Farraway
The Hon. Ben Franklin
The Hon. Rose Jackson
The Hon. Adam Searle
The Hon. Penny Sharpe
The Hon. Mick Veitch

Evidence in camera by **ALFRED PRIESTLY**, Private Individual, affirmed

The CHAIR: Welcome to this virtual in-camera session of the inquiry into floodplain harvesting. I welcome Mr Alfred Priestley, who has agreed to give evidence in private today. Before we commence, I will make some brief comments about the procedures for today's hearing. Please note that this is an in-camera hearing, so the evidence is confidential. This means that this session is not being broadcast and the transcript of today's session will remain confidential to the Committee. In certain circumstances, the Committee may find it valuable to publish some of what you say. If so, the Committee secretariat will consult with you about this, taking into account your circumstances. Ultimately, the decision as to what is or is not published rests with the Committee. As you would be aware, your evidence is protected by parliamentary privilege. It is important to remember that privilege does not apply to what you say outside of your evidence today at this hearing. To minimise disruptions and to assist our Hansard reporters, I ask members and Mr Priestley to state your name when you begin speaking. Mr Priestley, you now have an opportunity to make a statement to the Committee. Then we will go to any Committee member who wishes to ask you a question.

Mr PRIESTLEY: I am from Moree. I currently reside in Gunnedah, New South Wales. My traditional name is Wirrijin Murri. I come from Moree originally. I grew up on the reserves in Moree. I am the direct descendant of Curragundi. Curragundi is what we call a binghi daramai—head of all the rivers and waterholes. That is what his name means—many waterholes. I am here because of who I am and my inherent right. I have a birthright and an inherent right to those river systems and my songlines, and to my traditional right and roles and customary laws to that country. I want to make sure that my people are sitting at the table as equals with all of you regardless of how deep your pocket goes.

Everyone knows the Aboriginal situation and I think everyone knows about what has happened in history. I don't have to repeat history to any of you here sitting at the table. I don't have to repeat any of it. I think we all quite know the Aboriginal circumstances in this country regardless of whether it is water, education, health or anything else. We were already sitting here in this country—and this is a part of my statement—as a label that has been given to us by this country, by the Commonwealth of Australia, and that label is called Aboriginal. I am here to make a statement to say to you people that I am not an Aboriginal, I am a Murri from Kamilaroi. That needs to be clear. Everyone else in the other nations that surround me, which my songlines flow through, are called what their race of people are called. I am a Murri from Kamilaroi, and the part of country that I am talking about, and the floodplain water that falls from the sky is about my country: Kamilaroi. You might call it north-west. I don't not know what you call it, that section. I understand where you people are talking about because you have got different environments than we have, and you have certainly got different management.

We have seen the management of our country since the day you first set foot on it. We know what has happened to our rivers. We see it; we grew up through it. I am a fifth generation of Curragundi. Curragundi met Thomas Mitchell when he first came to Moree. Thomas Mitchell could not get past Boggabri when he first came there because it was like a big inland sea. We knew how to manage that water. We talk about the big place up there, they call it the Gwydir Wetlands, which is now reduced to 827 hectares, which originally would have been more than 220,000 hectares. We talk about impact and all these sorts of things. I don't need to go over all those sorts of things. I think I pointed out quite clearly in my submission I just need some answers as to why my people were not met with all those things that were promised. I think that's fair. Like what I am saying about the water that falls from the sky that you call dam, the floodplain water, to stop arguments between the north and the south because all I see is white people and investors and foreign people all rowing over the water falling from the sky. It is probably unallocated water which should be put in the cultural bucket. That is probably where I go with all my statements and anything else. I have got something else to read out, which I will read out, and that's about it.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Priestley. Did you mean that you wanted to read that out now? Is that what you were suggesting?

Mr PRIESTLEY: Yes, I will read that out now.

The CHAIR: Yes, please.

Mr PRIESTLEY: My nation, the Kamilaroi, and the surrounding nations neighbouring us—and that includes the Barkindji—know all the issue of floodplain harvesting, just asking the New South Wales Government to abide by the laws and Acts that were written on the issue. My submission gives detail to every Act and law, water sharing plan, water resource plan that have been broken repeatedly by this Government on the issues of floodplain water. Water Management Act 2000 states that any unallocated water should be put into a cultural water bucket. The floodplain harvest water is unallocated water. Minister Pavey, she is in some sort of thing with

wealthy floodplain harvesters. That is just my belief; I am not pointing the finger at anyone. That is just what I believe and that this should not be given away to anyone at all.

Like I said, the argument needs to stop between the north and the south, and that is simply by giving the unallocated water where it is supposed to go and that is into the cultural bucket. If we have to sit down and negotiate that with other nations to see how we work that all together, then that is fine too if you want to go down that process. But, in the meantime, what has to stop is the argument between the north and the south, put the water into the cultural bucket so that we have a means to be sitting at the table as equals. To go back to the point of where I stated that each of us in each nation need to be addressed accordingly to who we are under our birth rights and inherent right to these countries, you are always making the statements about our country but label us as Aboriginals. That needs to go for us to see that you respect us properly. The other thing about what I just talked about in those things that I have not finished reading out is the fact that these things have not been actually done through your swamps, your State management outcome plans and that. These things have not been done.

With our people, we have not got these things. We do not have your big farms and all that. You can say, "You got these licences and that. You can have this and that," but where do we put it? Everything has been taken from us. It is just some imagination or some aspiration by this western society to think that we can do whatever we can do with this water even if we have it. But there are ways and there is a way that we can all do this together so that we are all prosperous, because in the end the other people in the industry and the other people in farming, industry, irrigation, everyone wants to save a bit of money. Everyone wants to save a bit of money. This is what we hear. We have lived on this river without no money for—well, youse estimate a hundred-odd thousand years; we say time immemorial. So money is not our problem as our being a party at the table. We are not included. It clearly shows that we are not included. That is why I wrote the submission in the first place.

I ain't no peak body person; I am not a statutory Aborigine. You know what a statutory Aborigine is? He does a public service test and he gets a job with you fellas. He goes out to the community to consult with the ones that he wants to consult with, which is the other peak bodies in the community. And the real traditional owner? He is sitting down over there on the riverbank. He don't want to hear you because you ain't got nothing for him. All you got is his intellectual property written in books for a cup of tea. How insulting is that to us when our land was taken? How insulting is that to us to keep asking us these questions and keep asking us to be engaged and consulted when we have nothing from it? If I can get an answer, how much does Aborigine people own nationally? Water, how much? That is a breach of human rights for us nations people in this country to own that amount of water. That is ridiculous; that is ridiculous. That is a breach of human rights.

Nationally, what is the percentage of Aboriginal ownership in water? And we want to talk about these things here in this State, and then we have got to stay and above us with a waterfall up there. What do we do down here in this State? What do we do when my country crosses the border when the most tangible part of the map of Australia is the part at Mungindi? It has a river—our river. There are more people out at Mungindi. What have we got to do if we catch the fish? Who own the fish? Who own it, New South Wales or Queensland or environment or the Commonwealth? Who else? Who else got the plaque out up there? If we get the fish, who own it when we do not even own a cupful of water there? You want to engage us all the time and say to us it is going to be transparent and it is going to be genuine; it is going to be with good faith and driven. I am 50 years old. I have swum those rivers. I know my songline; I know my songline from the top to the bottom of them. I have seen the mismanagement too. I have seen the changes in the river. I swam in the river when I could open my eyes and see everything on the bottom when I was a kid—with the [inaudible] and the Gwydir. Then they put Copeton Dam in. Do you think I could see in the water then? No.

I am not talking about all those type of managements and mismanagements. I am talking about us being engaged as the Murri from Kamilaroi, as the Barkindji from Barkindji, as the mob from each one, because those are my brothers and sisters and I have songlines and totems that connects me as family to all of them. I do not need a letter of support from them all. It is here; it is written in here: Look, my veins. The same DNA is running in those rivers: my DNA. Everyone's DNA is from the top that sings a song to me through those waters. That is what I am saying.

What I am saying is that we need to be up there with you fellas. That is fair. All those problems that I talked about in my submission need to be fixed. It does not need to be argued over. It just needs to be fixed and it needs to be engaged as a bunch of human beings and adults together with no colour, with an understanding of who we are and who we want to be. You fellas sitting there in a pink dress, with a pink beard, have a fairy thing on now—how would you judge me? You can't, but I am being judged the whole time through this whole process and all of my people past, present and future. But we as people, as human beings [audio malfunction] because at the moment in this Constitution of Australia I don't exist as a human being; you have labelled me as an Aboriginal. You all need to help us become human beings in the Constitution whereby you give the natives of this continent

now known as the Commonwealth of Australia, "Hereby we insert you fellas in there as human beings." No voice, none of that, and we can fix all these problems together as proper human beings together.

That is all I am asking, and that is all my people are asking: to be treated fairly, to be put on the table fairly. And the things that you commit to, make sure it is genuine so that we do not have to keep burdening all these old people and these young people that are suffering with a loss of access to the most personal places of dreaming, which is the river. We did not live in the desert. We created the wetlands. We created it all, just like I have told the people the story of Tiddalik. Tiddalik is not a frog; Tiddalik is an engineer that built the dam and everyone downstream had to negotiate through him. We do know about water management. We got away from the other structure. We became bio-organic. It works. We can integrate all this stuff together, but we have got to come together as humans first and do this properly. That is all I am asking. I am not pointing fingers at nobody; I am pointing fingers at now we can fix it. That is all I am asking. Thank you.

The CHAIR: [Disorder].

Mr PRIESTLEY: Can I just finish there?

The CHAIR: Yes, thank you, Mr Priestley. Sorry, I thought you were finishing something. Thank you very much for that [disorder]—

Mr PRIESTLEY: I won't go on with the rest of it. I was only just pointing out basically what I have been saying, anyway. I am not on anyone's side. I am not on the south or the north or the irrigators or the industry. No, no, I am here as me, Curragundi. I have a responsibility under my laws and practices and customary ways. That includes you fellas, you and my country. How can I be responsible under my laws and customs if I am not allowed to sit at the table because I have got to wear a public servant hat or I have got to be a land council director or a land council councillor or a native title person? No, no, I am Curragundi, bushman. That is who I am. I am a king [inaudible]. But am I respected like the Queen over there? No. I am not asking people to respect me like that either. I am just asking people to acknowledge that these people are here. We are real, we are human beings, and we need to be up there too. We have got some good things that we can bring to help all this integrate together.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Priestley. Thank you very much for all of that very powerful opening statement. I did want to say, just to assure you, that the Committee members also have your submission and have read your submission. Just a quick question from me; we are sharing the questions around. This Committee, firstly, is not a Government committee as such. It is a committee made up of different political parties in the New South Wales upper House, and we are looking at this process of the Government's plan to license floodplain harvesting and seeing if we can make recommendations. Some of us potentially agree with it; some of us do not. We have very different views here, just so you know. We are seeing—

Mr PRIESTLEY: [Disorder].

The CHAIR: Yes, that is right. We are wanting to hear from different stakeholders, including yourself, to get your views. I did just want to ask you about the process that the Government has undertaken so far to, if you like, license what is this extraordinary take of water in the north of the basin. You have put your thoughts, your feelings, your opinion into your submission. Firstly, you have not been in any way consulted, I would think, and whether the Kamilaroi have—what sort of consultation has taken place around the extent of what is going to be licensed, do you know? Firstly, the question is around have you been consulted? What consultation has taken place that you know of? Also, how do you feel about what is going to be a huge effort to license this huge amount of water that is being taken in the north of the basin? So, firstly, it is consultation and, secondly, your views on what the Government plans to do.

Mr PRIESTLEY: When the first lot of talks started, I heard about the consultations [inaudible] because I have been basically telling my people and the neighbouring people and my neighbouring nations that I heard about that this is going to happen for quite a while, actually. I even actually went to a meeting with them and I basically knocked back their water sharing plan for the Gwydir and stuff because they never consulted with me or my family in the first place. The first part of consultation is talking to the right people. If you are talking to the community Aboriginals, well, you are not talking to the traditional owners. There are two differences.

That part of consultation about whether Pavey is going to give this water away to these wealthy irrigators and stuff like that—and we work with a lot of those wealthy irrigators too, mind you. We have done a lot of cotton—I used to work for the Mulligans for quite a while harvesting their cotton, cotton chipping. So we know those people such as Jimmy Cush and all of them people. So we know a lot of them. I come from Moree; I grew up in Moree, so I regularly see them all the time. Not that I have got personally anything against any of them. The talk about giving that water—what bugs me straightaway is that it is coming from the bloody sky. Come on, people, you know? All the rivers are cut up, the creeks are cut up. We have got so many dry creeks that have got

permanent water in there ever since they put Copeton Dam in there. We know that. We know those rivers always dry up and come back and all these sorts of things.

Then I thought, "Well, they can't just give that away. What about us?" They talk about these things and they got four buckets of money and one bucket of water. Who owns a bucket of water? You have really done it. Well, what good is that to us? Where is it? Is it gulf water or something? I don't know. How do we get a bucketful of money like all these other fellas are talking about the water? Funny. I said, "This can't happen. I'd have to find out," you know? I have got at least put something in there so we are sitting at the table at least. If you are going to license this, come on, give us some of them licences too, because it is coming from the sky; it is ours. It is unallocated at the moment. It should be just put into a bucket and then you apply for a licence to look after it. Why not do that? If it is in our cultural bucket and you have got to get a licence off of us for it, well, that gives us some economic basis because some farmers especially [audio malfunction] able to find those lands. They are on their own land again, back on their rivers. They just have to work with you fellas.

We have got a couple of little properties, I guess, but they are not enough to sustain us. We talk about water security—water falling from the sky, calculated in volumes, whether it falls in this area. We know how much it can fall over here or that area or that catchment. It is easily calculated over a year's fall. That is something that our people know. If people in that area go, "We know that this is the allocation of water that is going to fall from the sky," give and take what Mother Nature is going to bloody do anyway, we can bank that sort of stuff. That is how we can start to build an economy base and we can start to do things as ourselves. We talk about self-governance and we talk about these things of independent processes, but you look at all these other things and we are waiting around for these people to deliver these things. Well, that is not independent. That is not independent at all. That is like us begging again, "I'm wondering when you're going to give this stuff to us."

What have we got to do? What do we really have to do to show you that—you know, have a bit of compassion for us at least. I am not trying to stop youse thinking about the dollar you are going to win or lose. Have a bit of compassion about us, meeting us at the table and getting us out of the dust and the long grass that we have been put in. If we are eating that long grass and dust all the time, how do we see what you fellas are doing to our rivers when we are not engaged properly? That is what I am saying. We just want to be there. If you are going to license it, let us be at the negotiation table and let us see what these licences bring for us, or otherwise stop the argument between the north and the south. That unallocated water needs to go into the cultural bucket now—

The CHAIR: [Disorder].

Mr PRIESTLEY: —because it is there, written in black and white. That is your law. If this ain't happening, how do I teach my kids about Commonwealth Australia and how they are going to live in it? One, we are not even humans—that is what I am already going to teach my boys and my kids. I have got eight kids that I have got to teach about this world they have got to live in out here. I came off the mission. I came off the mission itself four years ago. Moved off the Aboriginal reserve four years ago. When I walk down the street, I am identified four miles away. I have not got blue eyes; I have not got blond hair; I have not got fair skin. I am not one of those fellas. I am a mission fella, black fella. I am one of the [inaudible]. You know what I am saying? We just want to be at the table. We want to be there. We want these things to be met properly. If the label is gone, then you are really talking to the people. Every time I look through the last 30 years of water reforms, I see our intellectual property there. I see it there and all the stories. Most of those people are gone now. They are gone and they don't even sing those songs in that water no more, but here we are today, talking about the same things. My submission is real clear and all I want to do is for it to be doing what it is supposed to do, but the water falls from the sky.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Priestley—

Mr PRIESTLEY: Water falls from the sky [inaudible]. Don't allocate it. It needs to go in the bucket.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I think Ms Sharpe has a question or two as well.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Thank you, Mr Priestley, and thank you for making the effort to come and speak to us during this hearing. Thank you for your submission, which is a pretty damning indictment on the failure of water policy to work with people like yourself and people in your community, Kamilaroi, and others across the State. I can say to you up-front that many people in this Committee have been very concerned about the things that you have pointed to, which is that there is a lot of talk about cultural water but there appears to be very little delivery in terms of one drop of water that is actually considered that. Just to give you some assurance, I suppose, I can say that many of us really understand that, and thank you for your input on that.

Mr PRIESTLEY: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I think that what you are proposing to the Committee is actually a very interesting idea and it has not been really put forward to us throughout this sitting. There are people who are saying, "Look, floodplain harvesting—it is water from the sky. It should just be allowed to run in the normal way," because there has been so much interference in terms of built structures that divert the water and capture the water and upset the natural flows. There has been this sort of general approach that we just should allow it to run and to let it flow. Your suggestion, I think, is very interesting, which is that if it is unallocated at the moment, who is it going to be allocated to? The current proposal is, yes, it will be allocated and licensed to those landholders who currently use it primarily for irrigation. So I just wanted to confirm that what you are not suggesting that it not be licensed at all; what you are suggesting is that the water that is available through floodplain harvesting should be allocated as cultural water and that there is an opportunity then for traditional owners and people to then do work with individual landholders around use of that water and licensing. Am I right in that that is what you are proposing?

Mr PRIESTLEY: Well, for a start, the water is unallocated to begin with, so it should be put automatically in the cultural bucket.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, that is right but, as you know, that is not the case.

Mr PRIESTLEY: No, no, that is what it is. [Audio malfunction] cases of it because [disorder]—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Sorry, we just lost you then, Mr Priestley. Can you start again. You are just breaking up a little bit for us.

Mr PRIESTLEY: I am still here.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, we can see you.

The CHAIR: Yes.

Mr PRIESTLEY: All right. I will turn [audio malfunction].

The CHAIR: Yes, maybe turn the video off.

Mr PRIESTLEY: Are you there?

The CHAIR: I think you have to gone to plug your phone in or something and you are now in a different part of the building that does not have as good reception. Can you turn your video off?

Mr PRIESTLEY: So mine is off.

The CHAIR: Video?

Mr PRIESTLEY: Yes.

The CHAIR: There we go. Let's see how that goes. Okay. Penny, what was Mr Priestley saying just then? He might just need to repeat his last sentence.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, sorry, we did lose you. I am just trying to explore the model that you are suggesting, which is whether the water that is currently there for floodplain harvesting—essentially, you are asking who does it belong to and, given the history around cultural water and lack thereof, that there is an opportunity here, if people are serious about engaging with Kamilaroi and other people, to actually look at making that sort of secondary licensing system where it is allocated as cultural water and then there are arrangements dealt with. I am just trying to understand that I think that is what you are pointing to.

Mr PRIESTLEY: What is sort of getting to me too, Penny, is I see the water that fall from the sky, right? What they call flood plain is unallocated water, isn't it? Is it not?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Well, I am not arguing with you. It is currently unallocated, but the entire inquiry is looking at how that is going to be licensed, metered and monitored. So it is going to have—

Mr PRIESTLEY: It still goes back to the fact that it is unallocated.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes.

Mr PRIESTLEY: There is the process there of unallocated water.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes.

Mr PRIESTLEY: What does that process say about unallocated water? [Disorder].

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: At the moment it is mostly stored and used on properties with some allocation going in for flows, but that is the whole point.

Mr PRIESTLEY: Well, the 2000 Act states that any unallocated water should be put into a cultural bucket.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes.

Mr PRIESTLEY: That is unallocated water. This is what I am getting to. If we are going to get to a point of where we are going to discuss about licensing, well, it is unallocated. So the first people that should be at the table of any licensing of this unallocated water is us.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes. That is good [disorder].

Mr PRIESTLEY: Regardless of what anyone—it is written in black and white there. It is unallocated water. That should be ours, so we should be the one sitting there saying, "Okay, let's see how this licensing does work." But we have to be sitting there and engaged and consulted first. Not the irrigators, not all of them, no—us, because that is unallocated water. That is where I am coming from with all this and if we are sitting around properly, we all can come to a point where that unallocated water, which legally belongs to us, we can talk about how it can be licensed and the licences' need for it.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes. Thank you, Mr Priestley. That is good. I just wanted to ask you specifically about that because I think it is an important perspective about how to move forward on this, which we have not really had before. So I just want to thank you very much on, again [disorder].

Mr PRIESTLEY: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The Committee continues, I think, to struggle with just the complete failure in relation to cultural flows and cultural water, and I think you have provided very good input today about a way forward on that, so thank you.

Mr PRIESTLEY: Thanks, Penny.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Priestley. We will now move to Ms Rose Jackson from the Opposition, who also has questions.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Thank you, Mr Priestley, for your evidence today and your written statement. In your written statement you talk about the greater economic opportunities that might come from resolving this access to water. I am wondering if you could elaborate on that and give the Committee a sense of what, as I said, you describe as the greater opportunities for economic access to water might look like and what benefits that might bring.

Mr PRIESTLEY: You know, things like the buyback schemes and all those sorts of things. Our people have got to be able to have a means to be able to resource ourselves in this water game, leave it in the communities that live along the river reaches, which is pretty much all of Australia, because we are the ones that is left in the communities. Hopefully, we get a little bit of funding for this and that, but if these things happen the right way, we have a way to trade water and all these sort of things to be to build economy; enable our people to be able to run programs, work in unison with government and farmers and all that to have cultural ecotourism; the sustainability and restocking of estuaries, all those sorts of things; aqua farming, horticulture, the growing of the right vegetations; the screening walls along unpropagated areas where sediment build-up is a real problem, blowing into the rivers, because there are no screen barriers such as tree lines of native vegetation and all these sorts of things.

Then that means where there is unallocated waters, that they be able to be traded in parts, that there is economic use for it for our people to be engaged in industry and all sorts of things in a manner that we have not been engaged in because simply we did not have the resource to be able to do it in the first place. This gives us more of an independent role and independent process and being able to sit at the table as the Murri from Kamilaroi, the Goori from over there in Lismore, Gumbaynggir, the [inaudible] down there or the [inaudible] out west. The principle applies right across the spectrum if these things are able to be done in the right manner.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: That was actually quite an excellent and comprehensive description of some of the economic benefits. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about the cultural importance of water for the Kamilaroi. Describe to us what water means culturally for the Murri people.

Mr PRIESTLEY: I will tell you now, Rose. When the creator came to our country, when he came to this world, he came down and he took the form of us Murris. He made himself a really deadly-looking warrior,

and he fell in love with this woman, one of our einas. She was the mother to the Seven Sisters. Her name was Birrahgnooloo. She fell pregnant to him and she gave birth to a boy. His name was Daramulum. When Daramulum was born, he was born in the black soil. When he was born, his birth went through the soil into the water tables and out through the water tables into all the riparian zones and all the creeks and rivers and streams and swamps and everything—everything that carried water. And everything that carried water carried his memory. All the animals, the birds, the trees, the sky, everyone knew who he was. His name was Daramulum, and every day and every night and every time and every moment that was ever created is because of only one moment and that is now, because yesterday is not here. It don't exist physically and tomorrow doesn't either. In that memory, he made us. Out in that memory, that flood, that water is our song and our memory. Everyone that lives and breathes and drinks and touches that water, that memory, all remember his birth. Through his birth he gave birth to all the management of all the system itself, because our people knew when it dried out, we had to have a place for all of us to go and that was the [inaudible]. They call it [audio malfunction] they call it something else; we call it [inaudible]. They call it the Gwydir Wetlands. The Macquarie Marsh is the other place. They created them for human beings to survive the dry and harsh times. That is why I am saying at the table of human beings we can all create those places because all these things can work together. We just have not sat down to put it together. That is why it is important to us.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I think it just really useful to have some of that included as evidence, so thank you so much, Mr Priestley.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Priestley. We have got a few more minutes left. I will just jump in with what is maybe my final question. When you are standing on a dry riverbed and you know that in some times of the year—not all the time—when you see your rivers or creek dry and you know that in the north of the basin there are storages—massive storages—that are pretty much full, how does that make you feel?

Mr PRIESTLEY: Probably like all you fellas down in the south. They have got to stop being greedy humans. That is probably about it, you know? Stop being greedy. That is all it is. In the end it is just greed. Why hold that all up there when everybody down—not only us but everyone needs it. Animals need it. People need it. Mary down the road who want to water her pumpkins need it, you know? It is not just the industry. They seem to forget the human beings that live along these rivers. Not just the industry, humans—us. I think we all forgot about that. We forgot about love and humans, you know? We did. Have a look at the state of the place. We could all sit at the table. We don't want it all; just some so we could just help the people downstream, you know? It should not cost money. It should not cost anything. It should just cause [inaudible] because you feel that way for the fellow downstream. Anyway, that is how blackfella look at it.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Priestley. That was a very good statement to finish on. There was definitely, as you were talking, a lot of your words for us to be able to consider, hopefully include in the report and hopefully that it also influences the recommendations and findings that we make as well. So I really want to thank you, Mr Priestley, for making the effort again to appear before this in-camera hearing. The secretariat will be in touch with you at some point in relation to your transcript. We may consider in fact publishing, in discussion with you, potentially most of what you said. I think you probably will be okay with that. I will leave that discussion [disorder].

Mr PRIESTLEY: No, I have no problems with that at all, Cate. Like I said, I just want to thank you people for getting back to me and allowing me this opportunity. I am fine either way, if you want to publish it or whatever. It does not bother me. I just want to work with youse and my people are paramount.

The CHAIR: Absolutely, Mr Priestley.

Mr PRIESTLEY: I really want you to really take into consideration about the label. That needs to go.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Priestley. We are out of time. We need to make that decision about the publication of the transcript, but I needed to check with you. Thank you so much, Mr Priestley.

Mr PRIESTLEY: Thank you all.

The CHAIR: That is the end now of our in-camera hearing.

(The witness withdrew.)

(Evidence in camera concluded.)