

## Have Your Say Submission to Draft Northern Victoria Water Plan and Summary version

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Summary Page 11 Sharing Northern Victorian water resources. Quote: "Victoria's water entitlement framework safeguards all entitlement holders. These safeguards support compliance with Basin Plan sustainable diversion limits on how much water can be taken. In Victoria the Environment holds its own bulk water entitlements and water shares, providing the same security to the environment as to other users."

Without trawling through the 1000 page document I ask the questions:

1. Do we have a ready to go Cooperative Federalism National/State socio/economic contingency water plan to replace the water market and Basin Plan approach should the current drought extend into 2019/20 and beyond ??
2. Do the Victorian Ministers Water Act emergency powers, P.34 Summary, override Basin Plan compliance. ??
3. Do responsible Federal Ministers have emergency powers to override Basin Plan compliance?
4. Do State rural socio/economic welfare and National food and balance of payments security, the original aim of water trading, trigger effective Ministerial intervention??

Definitions: Plan: - 'A scheme of action'. Strategy: - 'Skilful management in attaining an end'

**Question: What is the Murray Darling Basin Plan strategic end game ??**

In reviewing the Draft Plan through the "have your say" process you need to be aware that the farming community have their heads down coping with the drought crisis not sitting at a computer loaded with 1000 pages of unreadable documentation. As a past community River Management Authority leader involved in flood mitigation works provision and ongoing management I recall being forced to grapple with public service administration of the Victoria Conservation Strategy while caught up in the ongoing impact of economic recession on farm operations. They claimed our works on riverfront public land were of no environmental benefit to their land.

Background advocacy

The writer contributed submissions, largely outside limited Terms of Reference, to the Victoria VEWH Parliamentary Inquiry and the SA Royal Commission advocating actions necessary to sustain our human needs socio/economic environment through improved irrigator and local community confidence in future viability without success other than to:

- influence Victoria environment water holder water management outcomes and, has noted the changing attitude of vocal environment advocates with commercial interests in irrigation agriculture as the unregulated market price of water increases.

The SA Royal Commissioner, in his Finding's, outside his formal Terms of Reference response, challenges:

- the legality of the Murray Darling Basin Authority consideration of socio/ economic consequences in determining the needs of the environment,
- challenges our commitment to International Agreements,
- challenges the acquisition of environment share through infrastructure upgrade,
- challenges the view that the water market has resulted in a swiss cheese effect in irrigation land use.
- supports continuing willing buyer willing seller buy back for the environment,
- considers that local communities are adequately compensated as irrigation agric. land use shrinks,
- but, accepts that Cooperative Federalism determines the outcome

History of drought –

- For Swan Hill, outside of most living memory, the wartime, 1939-1945 WW2, drought 1940 165mm, 1943 188mm, 1944 170 mm rainfall is the worst on record with Lake Hume the then only major water resource.
  - Swan Hill average 6 year, 1940 – 1946, annual rainfall 237mm.
  - Swan Hill Region economy from memory is said to be based on: \$500m irrigation agriculture, \$200m dryland agriculture. \$200m tourism all water access based.
  - Prolonged drought within the current framework is a huge threat to our community wellbeing.
- Do we Pray for rain? Pray for political wisdom? Or with others across the basin grin and bear it?

Murray Darling Basin Plan Confusion –

- In considering the commitment to the environment there seems to be confusion in the community on the definition of the environment.

**Is our objective to sustain our First Nation natural environment or our built world environment?**

- Examples are in Ramsar Convention Agreements which involve wetlands such as SA Coorong Alexandra & Albert Lower Lakes where SA Historic documents and pictures indicate salt water fishing before the barrages were built.
- Unlike Victoria's Ramsar 9,419 hrs Kerang Wetlands Lakes, SA Lower Lakes 142,530 hrs have no socio economic role in water storage and delivery other than to dump it in sea, and NSW Menindee Lakes are not Ramsar sites and evaporative water loss is being minimised.

*Keith A Greenham AM*