

Murray Darling Inequities:

1) Non land owning water holders / [REDACTED]

I have a small farm south of Cobram. I bought this farm without permanent water, but on the basis that since deregulation temporary water had averaged \$125/meg and my projections said we could make a comfortable living paying up to \$200/meg growing a few of cuts of lucerne a year and fattening lambs. To have had 50 megs a year - down from this farm's original 200 - would have been grand, but given a fair break, I can make do with temporary water

I am not seeking a government grant, but I do want a just and equitable system.

What really grates, apart from the fact that someone thought it was a good idea to allow water to be separated from the land (I don't care which party was responsible) is the fact I have to pay \$6000 per year to GM Water in infrastructure cost whilst the likes of [REDACTED] (and others) whom the pundits claim he directly and indirectly controls at least 50,000 megs in high security water throughout the basin pays nothing.

Should I buy 50 meg a year the base cost is \$120 / meg for infrastructure alone and then I have to go out and meet the market. Should I not buy any water I still pay \$6000-00 per year. Our friend [REDACTED] given the pundits are right, on the same basis would/should be paying \$6 Million a year.

As it was the government who let the genie out of the bottle it is incumbent that they do something about controlling it. Maybe the answer should be they should legislate that water holders be required to own a minimum of 1 Ha of "operationally irrigable" land for every 2 meg of water held. If their allocations are Upper Murray, then they have to buy that land on an Upper

Murray scheme, likewise the same for Murrumbidgee water. That would go a long way toward establishing an equitable system.

2) Flood plain harvesting in the Northern basin

I note that Melinda Pavey's excuse for allowing the northern irrigators access to the flood waters of the last year, before there were sufficient waters being allowed to flow down the Darling to meet the basin authority's environmental commitment to the Menindee lakes, was she had to let them divert the water into their storages to protect their infrastructure.

The infrastructure concerned that needed protecting were the raised access roads (which just happened to act as levee banks) and these access roads were in danger of being compromised if the flood plain waters were not diverted into the irrigators storages.

Surely the responsibility for the integrity of these raised roads built by these irrigators rest with them as they built those roads without sufficient culverts to protect them in the event of a foreseeable flood. The fact that the NSW government allowed these sham roads to be built in lieu of illegal levees doesn't mean the government is also responsible for their integrity, and if the irrigators who built them had not allowed for floods; well it is no one else's fault. Basically, if one is rorting the system, then pay the price.

3) Hold over water

Of course, allowing unlimited storage of these unregulated flows, as is done now costs the environment massive amounts of water. Any water taken and stored beyond what can be used in the immediate season is subject to evaporation. **3 metres per year** from storages that are in most cases only designed to hold water to the depth of 4 metres. This water that is lost in evaporation, which was the NSW Governments argument when they

drained the Menindee Lakes, is lost to everyone. The only difference being that the waters that fill the Menindee Lakes is environmental water and has been since time immemorial.

These unregulated flows, harvested from the flood plains belong to all, not just the avaricious few of the Northern Basin. For years these floods supported the grazing properties and the traditional people all the way down the Darling and then the leftovers flowed into the Murray and through to the Coorong.

At the moment, the waters that keep the Coorong alive come from the Southern Basin whilst the Irrigators of the Northern basin laugh all the way to the bank.

My suggestion is stop giving away taxpayers funds, and stop the inequitable rorting by the irrigators of the northern basin and then look at what needs to be recovered for the environment. Having sorted out the current inequities, the authority would then be in a realistic space from which every one could go forward.

The current operation of the basin is a scam. The politicians underwrote it. It is theirs to sort out.

Timothy Ashton

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