



The Goulburn Valley Environment Group Inc.

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2 July 2014

Water Act Review Secretariat
Water Reform Division
Department of the Environment
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CANBERRA ACT 2601

Review of the Commonwealth Water Act 2007

The Commonwealth Water Act 2007 (Act) was and still is groundbreaking legislation that has been extremely successful in establishing sustainable use of water in the Murray Darling Basin. Key elements of the Act must stay in place to continue this great reform and to overcome the cultural difference to water management that exist across all regions of the Murray Darling Basin.

The reasons for the creation of the Act have not changed, climate change forecasts have become more dire and State governments are laggards when it comes to the changes that must occur. Without Federal power and intervention the environmental condition of the Basin remains at risk.

Under influence of the Act the Basin Plan, while not within the timeframe expected by the review, is on track in the consideration of constraints management, environmental watering strategy and the development of water resource plans.

GVEG believes the Act should be strengthened to achieve the agreed Sustainable Diversion Limit (SDL). Federal and State governments have capped water buy-backs, are not treating the SDL adjustment mechanism in an open or equitable manner and show little interest in the removal of constraints to environmental flows. These aspects have the ability to adversely impact the implementation of the Basin Plan.

The recent loss of the National Water Commissions (NWC) to independently review the implementation of the Basin Plan is of concern and we believe it to be more important than ever for the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CHEW) and Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) to maintain the independence required to achieve the confidence of the community.

The recent appearance of political pressure connected with water trading by the CHEW highlights the requirement for the Act to reflect that considerations related to the sale of water do not involve social and economic considerations and are confined solely to increasing the environmental outcomes. Social and economic considerations have already been taken into

account in the Basin Plan and the Act should not be amended to address social and economic aspects.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Terry Court". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Terry Court
Vice President
Goulburn Valley Environment Group