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I write as a member of the public who is concerned with the possible reduction of availability of water for the environment.

The strength of the original legislation lay in its intention to make the use of water in Australia sustainable and in providing mechanisms to support that. These should not be threatened by alterations to a Basin Plan which is on track to produce good environmental outcomes.

The establishment of both the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder and the Murray Darling Basin Authority as independent bodies gave the legislation credibility and a degree of freedom from political influence. It is important that these functions are not lost. Similarly independent audit by the National Water Commission is essential.

While social and economic impacts should be part of the modelling, the aim is to maintain the environment and that should take priority. Without a healthy environment there will be no long term social and economic future of the Basin. Within the last two hundred years countless small wetlands which stored water and maintained natural flows in rivers and creeks have been drained and replaced by farmland and townships. The impact of overallocation of water for irrigation has reduced the Macquarie Marshes by over half. Cultural and environmental flows should not be further reduced for social or economic reasons.

In a market economy we should not be limiting the opportunity for willing traders to either sell water to be used for the environment or to buy water from environmental sellers if it becomes available. Any cap on water buybacks may disadvantage such people. All trade should continue to be required to produce environmental outcomes.

In my opinion we should be considering the provision of more water for the environment, not less.

Yours faithfully  
Jane Judd