



HASTINGS BIRDWATCHERS

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Water Act Review Secretariat
Water Reform Division
Department of the Environment
GPO Box 787
CANBERRA ACT 2601

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Email: wateractreview@environment.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

Submission on the review of the Commonwealth *Water Act 2007*

I am writing this submission on behalf of the Hastings Birdwatchers, a community group interested in birds and their conservation. Our particular concern is the survival of Australian birds, many of which are threatened with extinction. Our native water-bird species are dependent on the periodic flooding of the flood plains of our rivers, such as the Murray Darling Basin. They depend for breeding not only on major flood events, but also on smaller episodic events, which now occur more infrequently, because of the over-extraction of waters for irrigation. In the absence of large flood events in key freshwater wetlands every few years, many water-birds will fail to breed for long periods. There has been a large decrease in overall temperate Australian water-bird populations over the past 20-30 years.

The survival of the Coorong, an internationally important wetland and all the water-birds dependent on its continued health and survival, depends on adequate water flows reaching the mouth of the Murray River. In periods between natural floods, "environmental" water needs to be maintained to all the important wetlands in the Murray Darling Basin and all river systems in the country to maintain breeding populations of birds and other animals.

To this end we ask that :

- This review of the **Commonwealth *Water Act 2007*** should maintain the key objects of the Act.
- The independent functions of the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH) and the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) be retained.
- The National Water Commission be retained as an independent audit mechanism.

- There be no cap on water buybacks, as the achievement of the Sustainable Diversion Limit (SDL) will be severely impeded by any cap.
- The requirement that all trade should result in environmental improvements must be retained.
- Section 106 of the Act be amended to strengthen the transparency around trading decisions of the CEWH.
- There be no weakening of the regulations and procedures in the name of simplifying procedures and reducing red tape, ensuring that the wildlife resources of the Murray Darling Basin's rivers and wetlands are properly managed into the future.

Sue Proust

Conservation officer
Hastings Birdwatchers