



Submission on Draft NSW Water Strategy, Dept of Planning, Industry and Environment.

Thank you for the opportunity to have my say on this submission.

Priority 1—Building confidence and capacity through engagement, accountability, and transparency.

I note transparency has already improved a little to enable us to identify flaws in the system and report them back to this inquiry.

It would be helpful if we could trust our Minister for Water

Our minister for water should never falsely claim water connectivity in the Northern Basin because a flow has managed to reach Wilcannia, and an unrelated flow has been released from (and drained) Lake Wetherall at Menindee subsequently reaching Wentworth.

No... that is neither transparency nor truth.

Our water minister also stated to the nation that the Menindee Lakes once again had water in them. She failed to mention the water was limited to Lake Wetherall and Pamamaroo, noticeably not Lake Menindee nor Cawendilla, the 2 largest by far. This was misleading, as the many tourists from Sydney during the pandemic discovered.

Neither the minister for water nor the dpie water seem to face up to the fact that the 1st flush after a dry riverbed has a high salt and toxic sludge content, and requires sufficient fresh following to get through the system, not just accumulate in a downstream weirpool.

I agree to priorities 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Action on these is long overdue.

I have another concern, that while recognising First Nations /Aboriginal People's rights and values, this government is also assisting landholders of the Lower Darling to fence the Darling River. The reason is because the river is no longer sufficient to act as a barrier to stock from roaming over the boundary.

I have complete faith this government has neither ensured the type of fencing will enable emus and kangaroos access to the river, nor allow the Baakandji Traditional owners' access to their river. There often seems to be legislation without linking one action to other actions, many arms of laws without an overarching head to link and align them.

Further comment:

The 1st major flaw I see in this plan is by the initial premise that NSW economy is going to quadruple during the next 19 years,

Sorry, but we have limited resources, and sustainability appears to have a lower value than the chant "jobs and growth". There is no necessity for continual growth, as it is not sustainable in this world we live.

The single point we all have in common is we rely on the air, water and soil of our environment for any quality of life. We have observed marked destruction in the quality of these in numerous places during my relatively short lifespan. Often the cause for this is by 1 individual or company making money from a lucrative idea. The lucrative idea spreads, and soon the impact is so great on the environment, it is put at severe risk, or destroyed. One way we notice this is by lack of biodiversity with flora and fauna reaching endangered and extinction levels. (Such as in the dry Barwon Darling Rivers and Menindee Lakes of 2018-2019)

This culminates to reducing environments capable of supporting life on this planet.

Because of this, it is the responsibility of each government who is in power to reverse the trend of making this part of the planet less sustainable than today.

Proposal:

Every policy, every change to legislation, ask:

Is this proposal environmentally sustainable?

What in this legislation can enable further destruction rather than improvement to the natural world we live in?

With changes to this industry, is there a pivot point that should not be passed that will reduce the sustainability rather than protect it?

How can we implement rules to halt the expansion of this industry in this manner to maintain its sustainability?

What other policies or legislative factors are having negative outcomes to this environment?

Other policies affecting this overall picture of Northern Murray Darling Basin health include acting on climate change, reducing land clearing, ensuring no adverse effects from either coal mining or coal seam gas expansion will affect any portion of the underground nor surface water systems in the entire Northern Basin. Farming policies should be used to encourage a variety of cropping, also limiting pesticide and herbicide uses (that adversely affect soil and water microorganisms necessary for health environments).

At this time in history we are lacking a foundational policy framework that links all policies and legislation together.

A better way is to ensure sustainability 1st, then sustainably and wisely increase the industry and growth, if possible.

Example 1) where this may improve outcomes:

\$4.4 billion was made by irrigated agriculture in 2017-2018, during a dry spell. There was no expectation of further rainfall in the northern basin. This preceded the longest time the Barwon-Darling Rivers and Menindee Lakes were dry, in 2018-2019. We were given the excuse of climate change. However, it was found to be the river experienced climate change 3 years before the rainfall records did. Climate change and drought should never be used as an excuse to run dry the longest river system on the driest continent in the world so irrigators can claim water from 3 years earlier during dry to average rainfall years.

The underlying cause of this has not been rectified as yet. eg:

With the proposed changes to floodplain harvesting, (Gwydir Valley) no beneficial effects for the rivers will be evident until after 2 or more very wet years. They averaged out what the SDL is, and fiddled with figures for carryovers. This accounting system stinks. And it is likely to stretch right through the floodplain harvesting valley plans.

Governments must change their ways and give more value to wisdom and science, rather than greed and popularity.

My main concern is management of the Northern Basin of the Murray Darling Basin. I firmly believe if your department can get that right, sustainably, we can use it as a blueprint for managing water in a sustainable Australia. Thankyou for the privilege of having my say for this very important part of our future.