

In September 2020 I visited north-western NSW with a small group of naturalists. We stayed in accommodation on five national parks and nature reserves and saw stretches of the Culgoa, Paroo, Barwon and Darling Rivers. We realized how fortunate we were to witness a very rare phenomenon with the country blooming with wildflowers as a result of good rains following a prolonged drought.

However we were shocked by the difference in water levels between the Culgoa River close to the Queensland border, and Paroo River near Wanaaring. The Culgoa was almost dry, despite the good rains that had recently fallen, but the Paroo was flowing strongly. I understand the Culgoa is highly regulated whereas the Paroo is almost unregulated.

I believe this demonstrates the deleterious effects of excessive removal of floodwaters from river systems in the Murray Darling Basin. I am also aware of the critically poor state of Menindee Lakes which have suffered devastating fish kills.

The Murray Darling Basin must be protected from over-allocation of water for irrigation, particularly as the climate becomes more unpredictable and we experience more extreme weather events.