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Sent: [REDACTED]
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Subject: Draft Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy - Option suggestions

[REDACTED]
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NSW Government
Review Committee
Draft Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy

Dear Sir/Madam

I thank you for the opportunity to comment on options to protect water security for the Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy.

My family and I trust our local knowledge of the Lower Macquarie area in particular at the confluence of the Castlereagh, Macquarie and Barwon rivers will be considered for the future protection of this unique area that has been close to being decimated by corporate farming.

We are former landholders of the properties known as "Glenacre", "Larrimah", "Riverview" and "Wombullion". We were foreclosed on by the National Australia Bank in 2013 and made homeless, treated like criminals.

We were active members of the Lower Macquarie Community & Farmers Group formed in 2007 to seek recognition of the area in the Water Sharing Plan, as from Carinda to the junction of the Macquarie and Barwon rivers, we often had no water for both stock and domestic purposes, whilst irrigators upstream and the town of Nyngan and the Nyngan Water Ski park prospered at the cost to the Lower Macquarie.

We then had to watch as our land was purchased by a large corporation and was cleared illegally and illegal earthworks were constructed prior to being advertised for approval, transporting large volumes of Macquarie water for irrigation. We also saw the destruction of protected Mitchell grass on a Travelling Stock Reserve on Brewon Station without any prosecutions.

We suggest the following options for the protection of the land and water of the Lower Macquarie that the Barwon-Darling relies on to keep flowing:

1. The Lower Macquarie must take priority in the Water Sharing Plan before diversions to other systems. The Macquarie must reach the Barwon river. Contact us for history on this issue.
2. Lenders must lend ethically and implement penalties or foreclosure on borrowers who breach environmental law. Currently lenders are in alliance with their borrowers to assist in paying the minimal fines being applied when the customer is found guilty of criminal charges. We found ourselves

treated like criminals by our bank the day we were evicted, but we are not the family farmers with criminal convictions for breach of environmental law. Local knowledge eliminated by lenders whilst corporations increase their land acquisition and pay the fines to increase the value of the land.

3. The case of the Land & Environment Court finding Budvalt Pty Ltd (26 September 2020) guilty of an offence under the Water Management Act 2000 (NSW) for a 2km irrigation

channel on its property Miralwyn Cotton should be used as a precedent for further

reform as this channel took 5 years for a prosecution to be made and Budvalt Pty Ltd is still continuing the application for approval. Further compliance reform should include; protection of whistle blowers, protection of whistle blowers from jailable trespassing fines, increased fines and cancellation of Water Access Licences and dismantling of illegal earthworks, rehabilitation of land destructed.

4. Destruction of Travelling Stock Reserves in particular with native grasses such as Mitchell grass should also carry similar penalties.

5. Freedom of Information requests should be answered when the public want to know why

some prosecutions go ahead and some are withdrawn.

6. With recent emphasis on the protection of flood plains from irrigators accessing water, more emphasis needs to be made on the protection of surrounding areas of the river

systems from clearing and burning, again we have witnessed no prosecutions of farmers engaging in wide scale clearing and burning in total fire bans.

7. If compliance is not amended to include serious penalties, as has been the case with trespassing laws, illegal activities such as unauthorised pumping and illegal earthworks/clearing will create just as much destruction to the land and water of the MDB as has the over allocation of water.

We refer you to the 2 ABC reports (Lateline Battle for the Bush and 4Corners Pumped) on the Lower Macquarie that highlight the serious compliance issues we have witnessed.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-11-14/battle-for-the-bush/7903010>

<https://www.abc.net.au/4corners/pumped/8727826>

Yours faithfully

