



**LIBERAL PARTY OF AUSTRALIA**  
**VICTORIAN DIVISION - MILDURA BRANCH**  
**WATER ADVISORY COMMITTEE (WAC)**

*Submission to the South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Royal Commission*

The WAC was formed on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

The WAC's objective is

**"To ensure Sunraysia receives its fair share of available water for horticultural, farming,  
industrial, urban and environmental uses."**

The WAC hopes to achieve this objective principally by advising and lobbying State and Federal Coalition MPs.

The membership of the Committee is set out in Appendix 1.

The following are the WAC's general remarks on the Terms of Reference. The WAC has not had the time and does not have the expertise to make specific judgements and recommendations in relation to the Terms of Reference.

The numbering below corresponds with the numbers set out in the Terms of Reference.

1&2 The WAC suspects that the long-term average sustainable diversion limits for each basin may not in fact be achievable and will need revising. This is because inflows are reducing and they may soon be exceeded by outflows.

Alternatively action to increase inflows is urgently required.

Underlying all problems in the Basin seems to be that inflows are decreasing due to the Basin becoming drier. In this situation diversions are seen to be excessive and will need to be reduced unless more inflows and/or water savings are obtained.

3 The Basin Plan in its current form is not, repeat not, likely to achieve the objects and purposes of the Act and Plan without adjustment pursuant to S23A of the Act. This is because outflows (sustainable diversion limits) are presently excessive.

The additional 450gl being the subject of Ernst and Young's report of 19<sup>th</sup> January 2018 will be very hard to achieve. Shepparton cannot give up any more water without severe economic and social dislocation. Sunraysia likewise. Note that Sunraysia recently spent \$100 million and saved just 7gl.

Refer 13A below for further comments on the 450gl.

4 The WAC does not have the technical expertise to comment save to say that appropriate consultants should be briefed to advise on this important matter.

5 The WAC believes the 3200gl objective will not be achieved without "paradigm shift" projects as set out in 13 below.

6 There are none to the knowledge of the WAC save the problems below with the 450gl.

7 & 8 & 9 Illegal take and non-compliance will severely impede the implementation of the Act and Plan. The MDBA and each State where appropriate must take all necessary action to enforce the Act and Plan with penalties for offences which effectively act as a deterrent. The WAC believe at least two prosecutions for offences in northern NSW have been commenced and it will be interesting to see how these turn out. They will possibly be strenuously defended.

Borderline legal/illegal actively needs to be looked at, eg retaining overland flows with works that prevent the natural flow of water downstream.

10 If this information is not readily available, it should be.

11 The WAC does not know except to say that much of the low security water purchased by the government only exists in high stream or flood conditions, that is, it exists rarely at the moment.

12 The WAC believes that the MD Basin Plan as amended is satisfactory provided all States and the MDBA carry out their functions properly and inflows are increased. In this regard the WAC notes that before the Act and Plan were enacted the Basin was administered by a group comprising State and Federal Water Ministers. The administration usually failed because the States looked after their own interests first and the National interest a distant second. The WAC believes the Act and Plan are meant to put the National interest first.

The WAC now believes that the States in their administration of the Act and Plan are now starting to put their own interests first once again and this could lead to the collapse of the Plan. The WAC believes that the MDBA appears to be well managed and believes that it must look to exercise its authority given by the Act to compel the States to comply. If the MDBA cannot bring the States in line with the Plan, Parliament must enforce the provisions of the Act.

13A Ernst and Young's report of 19<sup>th</sup> January 2018 "Analysis of efficiency measures in the Murray-Darling Basin" indicates that most of the 450gl will be recovered from the Goulburn-Murray system (primarily Shepparton and Mildura).

As noted above the WAC doubts that will be possible without massive expenditure. Such expenditure will involve a paradigm shift in the attitudes of governments, communities and irrigators towards the value to be obtained from expenditure on water improvements. In other words, those involved will need to appreciate there is much more value to be gained from "increased expenditure on water improvements."

One example of this paradigm thinking appears to the writer to exist in the area between Swan Hill and Bendigo in Victoria. In this area there is still much flood irrigation watering pasture from huge channels which are as large as small rivers. The channels appear to be full at least for the six months of Spring, Summer and Autumn. The paradigm shift here would involve the spending of many millions and possibly billions to pipeline and pressurise these systems. Significant water savings would be achieved and the value of those savings should be seen to be considerably higher than the market value of the water. Over the 100 year life of the project however the value would be much closer to market. Compare the water savings from the pipelining of the Wimmera/Mallee channel supply, 55gl saved.

13B Snowy mark 2 needs to be considered. The WAC has no detailed knowledge of this scheme but it appears that large quantities of water will need to be stored if the scheme is to supply a large amount of dispatchable power. If that is correct there may be problems in summer and particularly in times of shortage of water due to drought and these problems may occur frequently.

The Federal government should be required to provide details of the water to be stored and the effect of such storage on flows in the Murray and Murrumbidgee Rivers.

13C The WAC sees the main water supply problem in Mildura to be the effects of a shortage of water in dry times. Such shortage is exacerbated by the fact that the system is or is on the verge of being over-committed.

In the last dry in 2007/8/9 25% of the Mildura irrigation area was dried off. Much of the dried off land was not producing heavily so the loss of production was not serious. But with the next dry, which may not be far away, high production land will be under threat.

Projects involving paradigm shifts in expenditure will be required to avoid or at least mitigate the consequences of dry periods. Those projects should favour permanent plantings over annual crops and pastures.

Action should be taken immediately to warn annual crop producers that their water supplies will be cut first in the forthcoming dry period. This action is needed in conjunction with the contemplated enforcement and compliance procedures.

Adrian Kidd

CHAIRMAN

20/4/2018

**Members of the Water Advisory Committee as at 31<sup>st</sup> January 2018**

Adrian Kidd – President, Mildura Branch, retired Solicitor, Committee Chairman

Jim Belbin – Vice President of the Committee, LP Member and formerly Chairman First Mildura Irrigation Trust

Greg Milner – Horticulturist

Frank Dimasi – Horticulturist and former Board member, First Mildura Irrigation Trust.

Malcolm Bennett – Horticulturist, Lower Murray Water Director

Cosimo Dichieria – Horticulturist

Maria Riedl – Community Activist

Kerryn Woodward – Pharmacist and LP Member

Russell Lamattina – Engineer & LP Member