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It would appear that the NSW Liberal/National Government is doing something that political parties seldom do. It is the sort of thinking that political parties should have, and that is thinking beyond a 4 year term of office.

This is to be commended in most cases, except in this case their thinking is going yet another step further in protecting corporate irrigation in the Barwon/Darling river system, hoping to maintain its legacy beyond its term of office.

The LNP's legacy is about shuffling the MDB water flow figures, so that it can benefit the LNP party donors and large corporates lobby groups like Cotton Australia.

There is nothing wrong with commercial enterprise using water from the river systems, in fact this needs to be encouraged and farmers need to be supported in their endeavours to make productive and viable operations to feed this nation and supply our nation with the raw materials for manufacturing, building this country's wealth and employment, But unfortunately this is where the LNP and in fact most governments then fail, and is where the true purpose of their decisions are laid bare before the people of this nation.

The LNP are not supporting farmers and farming communities for the benefit of our nation. They are not supporting the big corporation's extracting water because it is good for the majority of the nation. This is proven by their continual refusal to even enforce the laws on some of these corporations'. Again going one step further, when it is revealed that illegal activities were undertaken in the form of illegal earth works, the LNP government went to the extraordinary step to change the law, AND make it retrospective so that these companies could not be charged for doing so, but handed them a lifeline to allow further opportunity to have these works retrospectively approved.

It gets worse. Part of the MDBP is to buy back water entitlements from irrigators, to return water to the river system, and again, while some farmers want to sell their entitlements back to the government, they selected some large water portfolios to purchase. The family farmers that want to sell their water to make ends meet are told sorry, we are not buying back any more water, then the government go and make further large purchases, at excessive prices, buying back water allocations, where the water does not even exist. (Tandou purchase \$34M? of flood allocations purchased under Penny Wong, while there was no water in lake Cawndilla)

Again, these large commercial operations benefit from the public purse and the governments insatiable thirst for supporting large corporations with public money for the benefit of only these large corporations.

This sort of behaviour is totally deplorable and goes to show the lengths this LNP government (and governments before them) will go to, to protect the commercial water users in the NSW Barwon/Darling river system and into Queensland as well.

So now because of an engineered outcome, we have the "need" for the Wentworth broken hill pipeline project. Does broken hill need a more secure water source, well only since the government has supported large scale extracting in the upper reaches of the darling and tributaries, as well at the same time, due to the MDBP has required the draining the Menindee lakes to such an extent that they have been emptied almost as fast as possible. Where in 2016 an almost full system, (being approximately 1,400GL) of water was reduced to 480 in around 12 months.

What makes this even worse, if that was possible, is that this release coincided with a flood in the Murray river, so while this water was requested and perhaps required to balance the MDBP books, it

served for the most part, no benefit to the environment, but by draining the lakes, it has helped in justifying the need for a new water supply for Broken Hill. Now if this had happened just once, that would be an acceptable mistake (however incompetent) to learn from, but alas, this is not the first time. The exactly the same process was followed after the large inflows into the lake in 2012. In that event, the inflows were much more, where the lake system was at over 100% capacity, yet by 2014/15 the situation was so dire that the lower Darling ceased to flow for 8 months. This meant that the townships of Menindee and Pooncarie had no water suitable for human consumption, or even of a high enough quality for treatment for human consumption effectively, while the families that live along the lower Darling were left with no usable water at all for stock or domestic uses.

Imagine the uproar if a suburb of Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra or Adelaide were left with water so bad that showering in it caused skin rashes and infections. The water was so high in salt that it corroded pipes, plumbing fittings and air conditioners to the point of failure and required costly replacements and of so poor quality that it killed established fruit trees and gardens and vineyards. Anything that was not killed, was damaged so badly that even years later are still suffering the effects. Just imagine the uproar that would be heard in the media if this happen to where the politicians lived. There would be rioting in the streets, yet this was happening to towns all along the lower Darling and Broken Hill and the politicians that supposedly represent the people and work for the people, fob it off and have ignored not only the devastation inflicted on these communities, but they continue to ignore the real cause of it.

The Government would like you to think that they consulted the community with a survey about the pipeline and the survey showed that the majority were in favour of it. Then they would like to tell you that the design, tender, supply of almost 300km of pipework and commencement of construction was undertaken in just 18 months. This is a half Billion dollar project and the government can make it happen, from consultation to construction commencement in just 18 months, including the lead time required for design and the manufacturing of the pipes. That is an efficient government. Yet lets look at a couple of other projects proposed for the Darling river system.

To better manage the water in the MLS, a regulator was to be constructed between Menindee lakes and lake Cowandilla so that lake Menindee can be filled to capacity, before allowing water to flow into lake Cowandilla. This would then maximising the storage efficiencies of the system, having a full lake instead of 2 half full lakes. This was part of a proposed upgrade to the lakes design that was completed in the 60's, and has again been on the drawing board more recently, for more than 20+ years, yet the government has not been able to see fit to build this. Has anyone considered why? The town of Wilcannia has been lobbying for a new weir to replace their leaking weir for over a decade, (I believe much longer) yet the government has not been able to make this happen. Why is this the case I ask? The government did put a new weir in at Pooncarie, it was put in some distance downstream of the original weir and installed over 25mm lower in level. Because of the weir design and construction, while the effective height has only changed around 25mm, it has had a much greater effect (perhaps double) on weir pool heights under flow conditions. Adding to this, a fish ladder also installed which was only cm above the riverbed and has to be blocked off entirely to maintain any water for the towns water supply during very low flow or cease to flow events. Properties upstream of the weir that have always had water from the weir pool now do not. While 25mm may not seem like much, due to the very flat grade of the Darling River, this can have a significant effect on the weir pool location and volume, where an "inch a mile" fall in the river is often quoted.

With all of this, the Government would like you to think that they can organise the pipeline in such a short time? The pipeline has been in planning for many years and they have been doing their very best to create the situation to justify it.

Water Recovery that isn't water recovery for the environment.

Only the government could use the MDBP number for water recovery in this way it has been used.

For the most part since water has become a tradeable commodity, they have been over stating the evaporation from the Menindee lakes by anywhere from 30% to 50%. This is obvious when they claim that lake Menindee is totally dry after just 18 months from being full, are now empty from evaporation, yet a nearby lake that has no other water source still contains water 4 years after it was last recharged. The mysterious lake speculation. Sure we all know that there is evaporation, even significant evaporation, but still not to the extent estimated by the BOM data as they are constantly using dryland evaporation figures. So under the plan, the drying out of Menindee lakes will be saving water for the environment by saving these evaporation losses. So by using these over exaggerated evaporation figures, this saved evaporation water can be counted as water returned to the river, which means that this amount of water is no longer required to be purchased from irrigators to meet the SDL targets set under the MDBP.

So how does that look on the ground? Well it just means that the lakes are kept empty as much as possible, (broken hill and the lower darlings water security gone) while extraction continues in the norther reaches of the tributaries of both the Murray and Barwon/Darling river systems. So I ask this, is not the Menindee lakes part of the river environment? Is this not one of the biggest native fish nurseries in the whole Murray/Darling basin? How can you take water out of this environment and counted as a "water savings", then because it is "savings", it can then be counted as water "returned" to the environment? So effectively by drying up the lakes, under the MDBP the water in the Menindee lakes is double counted, both as water efficiency savings by no longer being stored (allowed to evaporate), then by default, because it is not "lost" it is assumed to be returned to the river, despite there being no actual water in the lakes in the first place, and even if there was, the real "savings" are nothing like the figures being used to justify this model.

The pipeline has one last step that has now come to light, whereby the talk was that the Menindee broken hill pipeline would transport water from broken hill back to Menindee township when required, however the government is cementing their plan for protecting irrigation water for the upper reaches of the darling by now decommissioning the existing pipeline. By removing the existing pipeline they are ensuring that any government after them cannot simply turn off the new pipeline and return the broken hill and Menindee supply back to what is has been since prior to 1950. This is the master stroke by which the current LNP are in fact thinking beyond their term of office, making sure that any subsequent government cannot change what they have put in place and it will largely protect these large commercial enterprises and their water licences. They have announced this decommissioning before even providing an alternative supply to irrigators that take water from the existing supply pipe, who have had access to an entitlement and water supply for over 70 years.

This still leaves Menindee with no reasonable supply as now Menindee will be stranded having access only from the darling but with the new lakes management to very likely reduce the stored volume from 480GL to just 80GL. This 80 GL will then need to supply Menindee, Pooncarie and the 80 families who rely on the darling river between Menindee and Wentworth, both town supply's, stock and domestic and irrigation entitlements, all the while receiving little to no inflow from above

Menindee lakes because of the over extraction, particularly of the small and medium flows.

It is not through drought that the lakes are now empty, just 18 months after being almost full. This was because the MDBA sort to drain Menindee lake as quickly as possible and drain the lakes down to the 460GL rapidly, despite the water not being required down stream at the time. Now the lower Darling is in a dire state, Again.

My question is this. Was this deliberately done to again justify the pipeline? Or was this done so that the government could put on their cape and pretend to be the superheroes that have saved the day?

What is the reason for the urgency in decommissioning of the Menindee pipeline? Is this to make sure that successive governments can not change what current NSW government has doggedly implemented despite lack of local support. They have pushed this through hell or high water. (mostly hell with very little high water along the lower darling)

Why has the regulator between Menindee and Cawndilla taken the lowest of priorities to be installed? Was this because of the need from Tandou to have access to water from Cawndilla?

How can a government go out to tender, design and construct and manufacture and deliver 300km of pipe for the ½ Billion dollar pipeline in under 24 months, yet can not even implement a compliance process to enforce water rules that have been in place for years after more than 10 months after being exposed as grossly inadequate?

Are we entitled to have the government re-build a weir at the site of our existing (now extensively damaged) weir? Up until 2002, the last time this weir was required was 1932 I believe. It was constructed some time prior to 1900 and is shown on the old river maps.

-The inherent flaws in the mechanisms and measures which have been used to implement the basin plans purpose and outcomes

There are other inherent flaws in the MDBP Model.

This is highlighted by the Submission by COTTON AUSTRALIA. They have highlighted the minimal flows being taken each year, when compared to the 100 year average in the Barwon darling system. As everyone knows, the Barwon/Darling river system is highly variable, both in seasonal flows and also from year to year. By using the 100 year average flows as a base line to award allocations from, (including the ability to take 300% of an annual extraction limit in some circumstances) it does not take into account the few years of extremely high flows in the system. Where in just a handful of years, as significant volume of water had run through the system. By using this system of averaging out flows, it does not allow for management of the dry years, or even the normal years as they are not well below the long term average. For example according the government records of flows at Bourke (since 2043), there have been 3 years above 10,000 GL/y. These were recorded at approximately 15,000, 24,000 and 27,000 GL per year. These will skew the long term averages where by most years (more than 80% of the time) flows were below 5000 GL per year. Intact, flows are Bourke, in more than 60% of the time has been less than 2500GL per year. So figures are just that, figures and can be interpreted to suit what ever purpose you wish, but what that can not change is the effect we can all see in the rivers and the damage that has been done to the environment and graziers along the river. While number can be manipulated, that is happening, the real human and environmental costs show the real story.

-The personal cost of the over extraction and mismanagement, Being either legal or illegal.

In 2015 we were forced to pay for a temporary permit to add sandbags to the damaged section of the weir to try to retain some additional water, prior to the 2015/2016 cease to flow event in the lower darling. There was absolutely no financial assistance in the purchase of sandbags and they were all installed by hand, mostly by elderly volunteers, as an in vain attempt to retain enough water for basic stock and domestic supply. Then, after promises being made of supplying water from Wentworth for our domestic supply, DPI refused to pay for the transport costs of a tanker traveling a further 40km beyond there existing supply route, but insisted that we could get water from the Menindee township (where there was massive water quality issues already) which was an almost 180km round trip to supply this water. This was not only ridiculous but would have also required to fill new tanks with putrid water which most likely was little better than the fluorescent green water holes that remained in the darling river in front of our house.

At the public hearing in Mildura, the Riverland irrigators made a comment about how there was an improvement in the river health since the implementation of the MDBP. While this maybe the case, and in fact could almost be expected under the plan, the Darling river has not experienced the same outcomes. In fact it has taken a very substantial hit, being largely sacrificed to prop up the Murray River below the junction. The water that has always been retained in the Menindee lakes for the water security of Broken Hill and the lower Darling, as well as providing water storage for SA at a better evaporation rate than lake Victoria, has now been drained down rapidly to supply the MDBP's required water to be delivered and measured in SA and flushed out to sea.