

From: Micheal Lawry
To: [Water Inquiry](#)
Subject: Dairy Farmer
Date: Saturday, 2 November 2019 5:22:56 PM

To whom it ma concern,

I will keep this short but sweet. I am a dairy farmer from Northern Victoria and I feel that as a family and community that we are being persecuted and exploited as a voiceless minority.

The changes to regulations around the use of irrigation water have in no way been to support the irrigation farmers or their communities. These changes have been to moved profit and power into the hands of the wealthy whether that be corporations or individuals and away from the middle class Australians that live in our Irrigation areas. So much water has moved out of our region that we our regional economy, community and environment are being destroyed.

Corrupt Politicians

In 2006 I was warned by a friend who was a water trader that Federal Politician Tony Burke was looking at properties in the Goulburn Valley of Victoria with a specific interest in accumulating their water entitlement, and that he felt that their was a growing interest from outside the irrigation region in the ownership and ability to prosper from water. Since then there has been many claims that other politicians have profited indirectly from the modern day gold rush that was the opening up of the water market. Supposedly Penny Wong's family owns significant parcels of water. Malcolm Turnbull has links to companies that own water and Barnaby Joyce has been said to have links to water ownership. If this is the case, that powerful politicians from all major parties have benefited from the opening up of the water market to outside investors (and I hope that you have the ability to examine these claims) then truly this is a national disgrace.

In the last few years water prices have skyrocketed to the point where the current generation of farmers are being destroyed and any hope for the next generation lost.

Murray Darling Basin Plan

So we have the Federal environmental water holder paying no fees on the water that they get delivered compared to the traditional irrigation farmers who are burdened with extreme delivery costs, that is tied to their land as the water once was. Due to regulatory changes they can then carry over this water from year to year, when we get to the current dry conditions as is currently the case, they can control up to half of the water in some storage. Note: They are currently trying to dump as much of this water out to sea as the MDBP sham is starting to be exposed. I won't go to far into it but the MDBP was originally intended to fix the unregulated over extraction of water from the flood plains of the North by corporate farms and the huge losses of water through evaporation in the lower lakes of South Australia as they refused to build lock 0, and return these lakes to their natural estuary state. Unfortunately both of these issues have been exaggerated as the plan was hijacked for political and personal gain, seeing the environment suffering just as much as our economy and communities. Anyway my point is that the Government owned water termed environmental water now makes

up such a large percentage of the water in our storage's that it has forced up the price of the now much smaller pool of irrigation water.

Water Traders

The fascinating thing that I find about the water traders is that as a farmer I am constantly bombarded with messages about how the price is going up, we need to buy water now and what the price will be next year. Now I know that they just want us to trade and buy water now so that they can make their commission. But how can all of these different traders accurately tell us what the price for temp water will be next year when we still have no idea what the allocation will be? and they get it right every time! Does the outside wealthy owners of entitlement tell them what price they will set for the next seasons water? Or do they hold enough water in their own accounts that they are the ones setting the price? Either way they have created a huge business that we don't really need. If we removed the external ownership of water and put the ownership of the irrigation pool back into the hands of family farmers, then a simple online open and transparent trading platform where you can buy and sell excess temporary water would suffice.

Water Ownership

This one is pretty simple. Take away the ability for non irrigators to own water entitlement. These outside interests are profiting from our hardship. Constantly trying to push the price of water to the absolute maximum that we can afford. This is destroying our farms, community and Environment. I cant see any benefit of this other than to support greed and exploitation.

Water Regulations

How on earth are we still in this situation where the water has been separated from the land but the majority of the cost associated with water corporations is still attached to that original lands entitlement. While the traditional family farm still pays for delivery fees that were based on receiving 270% of your water entitlement, when now getting 100% of your water seems unlikely. Note: I pay over \$40,000 p.a even though I own less than 200 megs of water and it would cost me over \$200,000 to relinquish these delivery shares.) Meanwhile these new corporate irrigation developments can avoid these excessive fees and for a small fee purchase only the delivery fees that they need. Plus non irrigators who own water only to trade pay even less in fees for the water that they own. It just isn't equitable and supports the interests of outside parties over traditional farmers. When farmers are constantly loosing access to water how is it that new corporate irrigation entities are being allowed to be set up, with the glossy brochure designed to entice investors money they are not here for the long term and largely using external investors capital to purchase water as an asset rather for productive use.

Obviously the ability for non irrigating water owners to carry over water, allows them to hold onto their water indefinitely and only sell it when dry conditions force the price of water upwards. As the irrigation water pool decreases almost all farmers are now dependent to some degree on the temp water market and as outside ownership controls much of the water on the market they also now control the price that we pay. Either link the ability to carryover water to delivery shares or get rid of it altogether. Also as the Murray Darling Basin Authority has far more water in its control that it can possibly use, because after all the irrigation flows running down our rivers are also

environmental flows, they can't physically drain enough water down the rivers to use up their allocation (they are actually destroying our environment by diverting water out of the landscape of our region and trying to push it down the river to South Australia), so it stockpiles in our catchments. Put a limit on the ability for this Government water to be carried over and then more water would be available for irrigators and the nature that they sustain in the dry years.

Spills from storage and systems losses should both be considered environmental water and come off the Governments environmental water account. After all these flows and seepage actually benefit the environment and it is completely unfair that they come out of the irrigation pool when no irrigators actually receives this water for allocation and it is released to the environment.

I know that it could do with some fine tuning but I hope that this submission highlights my concerns.

Thanks,

Micheal Lawry