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**Sent:** Wednesday, 13 July 2022 4:10 PM  
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**Subject:** Western Regional Water Strategy submission

## **Submission: Western Regional Water Strategy**

Though now living in the Sydney area I have spent the last 45 years in the North West of the state. During that time I have witnessed the gradual alteration of the country with the large scale development of irrigation farming and the inexorable progression of changes due to the Climate Crisis.

Historical accounts indicate that when Europeans arrived in Australia the countryside was a network of rivers, waterholes and wetlands maintained because the water was stored in the ground where it only evaporated slowly. European style land management drained swamps, built dams, developed irrigation, and ultimately led to the countryside becoming much drier.

The multitude of plans around the Murray Darling Basin individually consider flood plains, rivers and groundwater with a seeming lack of consideration that this water is all connected. It evaporates from the ocean, it falls as rain, it soaks in to become groundwater, it runs off to become rivers, ultimately returning to the oceans. Impact one and you impact all. And climate change models predict that though rain may be heavier, droughts will be longer, deeper and more frequent.

The natural environment in western NSW is already damaged. Algal blooms have poisoned long reaches of the rivers. The Darling/Baaka is already listed as an Endangered Ecological Community. It has never before been completely dry as it was in the recent drought causing the probable extinction of freshwater mussels in long stretches of the river. Building of dams has removed the medium sized floods which sustained the wetlands and groundwater, and allowed native fish to disperse, so now our rivers are dominated by feral carp.

It is apparent from the documents that the planners are aware of all this. This Western Regional Water Strategy must take steps to improve the health of the rivers, effectively manage the growing demand for water and allow more water to return to the rivers, maintain connectivity and create flooding.

Commitments in the strategy which support improved outcomes for waterbirds, native fish and wetlands must be prioritized. While ever current unrestrained use of groundwater, redirection of

floodwaters into private storages and draining of natural wetlands continues the western rivers will slowly die.

More efficient water use by towns and industries is a key. On the other hand water security is essential for the smaller communities. Improved management of the Great Artesian Basin is also essential.

I do not support the increasing dependency on groundwater. Nor do I support regulating the Barwon-Darling or reducing the size of Menindee Lakes. Town weirs should be removed and replaced by off-stream storages. (Maybe cover them with solar panels to reduce evaporation as well as generating electricity – encourage synergies)

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