

SUBMITTEE

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Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to make a submission regarding the Regional Water Strategies Program.

I am a private landholder on the upper Yanco Creek writing in response to a request for feedback from landholders affected by the Regional Water Strategies Program.

I am very concerned about proposals for the Yanco Creek and for my immediate area which will affect my property and its viability. It will also have a negative environmental impact on the Yanco Creek and the flood plain.

It has amazed me that the area I have lived in all my life is now referred to as the Upper Yanco Wetlands. This name has never been applied to the area before.

We have had a number of what are called minor floods in the last 6 to 8 months and I believe they have done considerable damage to the Yanco Creek in my area.

We constantly face considerable difficulty operating a viable beef and sheep farming business due to the continued high flows in the Yanco Creek. A large portion of my country is severely impacted. The following lists some of my difficulties:

- I have been unable to use the paddocks affected by these floods for grazing my stock because of the risk of the stock being caught behind rising waters and drowning or starving. In recent years large parts of my land has become too high risk to use for the traditional grazing I have carried out on my property for over 60 years. To give an example, this Monday I intended on selling some cattle at the market. My decision to sell was based solely on the ever present and imminent threat of another flood event just around the corner. This evening I have gone out to the paddock the cattle are currently in and already there is water filling the creeks which will overnight potentially cut my stock off from being accessible. So the risk is now that I will not even be able to reach them to sell them at Market on Monday.
- The massive concern of flood events is impacting on every decision I make in my day to day running of my farm.
- Further because large parts of my land is under threat of flood events, I am concerned to put stock in these areas and weeds and gum suckers are left to further spread. Ordinarily stock grazing on these pastures would help control the gum suckers and the weeds would be more visible to easily control.
- The weed issue is also exacerbated by the floods as the neighbour upstream from me fails to control his weeds so I am constantly getting new weed infestations from his property during these events.
- Pasture loss and damage. Establishing perennial pastures, and maintaining them, is an expensive operation

- Machinery is impossible to use and access to my woolshed becomes impossible meaning I have to schedule my normal farming procedures around these flood events. This throws all farm planning schedules out for the year as shearers and contractors are also juggling their own plans.
- There has been a large increase in the number of trees that fall and die along the creek because of the increased speed and intensity of water flow undermining their stability. Further debris and silt has increased and creek banks are being washed away.
- Roads and crossings damaged
- Fencing difficulties and loss of fencing. This causes an inability to keep stock secure on our land. Electric fencing will not work with water. Bulls easily travel between paddocks resulting in untimely or unwanted pregnancies, poor selling outcomes and higher veterinary costs-e.g. aborting heifers
- We have had to purchase kayaks, two boats and lifejackets in order to access river country to manage and access stock.
- Could we sell our properties at the moment? Reduction in land values in the long term as pastures are destroyed, crops inaccessible etc etc and the effects of continual flooding become increasingly visible.

The term good faith is used a number of times in the explanation of how the Landholder Negotiation Framework will work but I don't believe that good faith has been exercised in this proposed Upper Yanco Creek Wetlands Project. Things seem to advance considerably before affected landholders know what is happening. Affected landholders are dealing with different people from different departments and being dealt with on an individual basis meaning that what I am hearing might well be different to what another hears. This raises questions about the integrity of the process. Inducements have been offered to some or one but not all, a wish to divide and conquer?

The process is moving very slowly....perhaps deliberately and has become confusing.

I am deeply concerned that the changes in river management and the plan to run consistently higher river flows will severely impact upon my farming operation possibly making it unviable. I would like to think there is direct consultation and effective communication with farmers affected to ensure that farming enterprises along the rivers remain viable and productive with lower stress levels than we have faced over the past year.

In light of the above, I would like to be involved in the consultation process to address all of the issues raised..

Yours sincerely,

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