



Dear Sir/Madam,

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

After reading through much of your material I have realised that landholders and agricultural businesses do not rate a mention. I acknowledge the importance of local towns and communities, of the indigenous communities and of the environment but I would like to think that land owners: who have paid dearly for their land, who continue to provide food and essentials for a world facing food scarcity and who are generally great environmentalists protecting and nurturing their holdings, would be directly acknowledged and consulted during the planning phase.



Over the past year we have faced considerable difficulty operating a viable beef farming business due to continued high flows in the Murrumbidgee River. The lower river country has been severely impacted. The following lists some of our difficulties:

- Continual flooding through a billabong that cuts from one end of the property to the other end
- Approximately 160 ha (35%) of our country has been largely inaccessible for grazing for much of the past year (and in 2016) and in major flood events approx. 250 ha (55%) of the property goes under water (which is actually 70-80% of productive value of farm)
- Wasted fodder due to inaccessibility
- Pasture loss and damage. Establishing perennial pastures, and maintaining them, is an expensive operation
- Pasture weed infestation- unable to access country to selectively spray crops and pasture for weeds
- Debris and silt deposits
- Roads and crossings damaged
- Loss of cattle in flood water: 2 PTIC heifers and one PTIC cow along with numerous calves
- Fencing difficulties and loss of fencing. 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 and lifejackets in order to access river country to retrieve cattle flooded in
- Higher fodder and agistment costs as we feed cattle on pastures over grazed due to inaccessible river country or send them away on agistment.

- Inability to get to our irrigation pump-firstly to ensure its safety and secondly to fuel it and run it for irrigation purposes. There is a certain irony in needing to irrigate and being unable to access the pump due to flood waters inundating your property. There is a large cost in irrigation infrastructure and water purchase that is not returning anything for us when we are unable to access the irrigation system
- Weed issues including: thistles, Nagoora burr, Bathurst Burr, Blackberries. Since purchasing the property in June 2015 we have worked hard to eradicate these weeds. This past year has seen much of that work undone
- 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
- At the same time as we are facing these difficulties a neighbour has filled in the drain that allows water to escape from our irrigated country and travel back to the Murrumbidgee via his property should flood waters breach a licenced levy bank on the property. Breaching of the levy bank occurs only in a severe flooding situation however this may become more frequent with higher river flows. The drain was put in in 2010 or 2012 by previous owners of the properties. In the event of a major flood much of our property would be inundated and the water would not be able to escape (including all fixed infrastructure)
- Erosion of the levy has occurred in high flow events and remediation cost will be significant
- Loss of significant River Red gum trees which continue to fall as their root base is eroded

I understand that owning river country means some natural water encroachment; continued **man-made** high flows could be devastating for us along with many other farmers. I am deeply concerned that the changes in river management and the plan to run consistently higher river flows will severely impact upon our family farming operation possibly making it unviable. I would like to think there is direct consultation and effective communication with farmers affected alongside some financial support 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 some of the following and quantify possible impacts from the proposed river flow changes;

- Crossings/bridges – we have multiple that will likely be impacted
- River pumpsite flooding impact and accessibility
- Levy bank viability in higher flows
- Potential compensation for land use change/production impacts
- Land value concern due to more frequent and high flood events

I am happy to provide site inspections, photos, satellite imagery etc. to help work through this process and assess any potential impacts.

Yours sincerely,

