



AUSTRALIAN  
LABOR  
PARTY

# WEST WALLSEND BRANCH

Secretary

Bernard Griffin

President

Brian Adamthwaite

26<sup>th</sup> April 2018

Bret Walker SC  
Commissioner  
Murray Darling Basin Royal Commission  
GPO Box 1445 Adelaide  
South Australia 5001

Dear Commissioner,

At the recent February meeting of the West Wallsend Branch of the ALP, members discussed the recent announcement of the establishment of the MDB Royal Commission to investigate the theft of large amounts of environmental water by some large scale irrigators from the northern reaches of the Murray Darling Basin. The water theft has had detrimental consequences for all water users downstream along both the Darling and Murray Rivers including the Coorong.

Members passed a motion congratulating the SA government for its foresight in setting up the inquiry that you now head and asked that I submit a short submission to the Royal Commission.

The branch wishes to state that it is not only communities that live in the MDB that have an interest in the wellbeing of the MDB but all Australians recognise the iconic status of the rivers and riparian regions associated with those rivers as they are ingrained in much of the literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The following are a number of points that branch members feel should be addressed by you and your commission staff over the course of your adjudication.

## A Licensing Requirements

- Open public access to all licence holders
- Conditions of licences to be clearly set out and transparent i.e. water volumes, times of extraction etc.

## B Works and use Approvals

- Any and all physical works used for irrigation purposes showing appropriate authorisations from MDB authority
- Statutory Declarations declaring all works are approved
- Public access to those declarations and the right to dispute if works are not according to approval
- Audits by MDB inspectors of all "on farm" storages

## C Metering

- All water removal from streams through metered pumps. No meter, no water!!!
- Given the available technology all meters be "in real time". All extraction rates and amounts be transparent and available for inspection by MDB officers
- All meters be checked on a regular six monthly basis and at random on an unannounced basis, day or night.
- Any interruption to the "real time" metering be inspected within 24 hours, or all pumping is ceased.

## D Environmental Water

- To have priority over all irrigation water but below water needed for town supplies, station or property domestic supplies or stock water supplies
- Outbreaks of "algal blooms" to be dealt with as a priority to avoid potential fatal situations regarding both human and stock water
- Have NSW Government Ministers responsible for water in the MDB been acting corruptly in the sale of environment water to cotton growers along the Barwon River? Have cotton growers implicit in the purchase of such water been receivers of stolen goods?

## E Water Markets

- Water markets be transparent, open and regulated, perhaps in a manner similar to stock trading on the ASX. The ASX to report any suspicious activity to the MDB authority for immediate investigation
- No water earmarked for town and stock supplies to be sold. Environmental water released under the MDB plan sacrosanct as well.
- Water trading to be suspended in times of severe water shortages unless destined for urgent town, property or stock use.

## F Australia's International Obligations

- Ramsar Conventions to receive high priority above irrigation water

## G Water Impacts from landscape

- Large scale Mining Operation For example open-cut coal mining
- Gas developments
- Large scale land clearing
- These activities need to be scrutinised in great detail to ascertain the long term effects on both the ground water reserves and on the long term effects of water flow into the river systems.
- How has the broad-scale land clearing in Queensland under a

Coalition Government affected both the sediment levels and volume of water into MDB streams? How will the land clearing now legal in NSW under the present Coalition Government effect both water run-off speeds and sediment loads into the basin streams?

#### H Climate change

- What is the MDB Authority doing to plan for the consequences of a changing climate? Are the preparations robust and scientifically feasible?
- What changes need to be made to the legislation governing the MDB Authority to increase its resilience to further criminal activities regarding water theft in its multiple forms?

Members look forward to a successful Commission and hope that its findings and recommendations lead to a richer and a more diverse MDB.

Yours Sincerely

Bernard Griffin

West Wallsend Branch Secretary