



Core units: Exemplars – Year 7

Illustration 2: Murray-Darling Basin Plan: Alternative perspectives

Murray-Darling Basin Plan: A range of perspectives

Outlined below is a range of perspectives held by those with an interest in the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. –

Federal water minister: The Murray-Darling Basin Plan restores our rivers to health, ensures strong regional communities and sustainable food production. The plan strikes a balance between the needs of the environment and those of irrigators.

State water minister: The Basin Plan does not adequately safeguard the interests of the state's irrigators. Irrigators in other parts of the Basin are getting a much better deal. We plan to challenge the plan in the High Court. The Federal Government has exceeded its powers.

Local mayor: The Greens have got their way! Vast amounts of water will be allowed to flow into the sea. What a waste! Our local community will suffer. With less water irrigators will be forced to leave the land or revert to less intensive forms of agriculture. Local businesses will suffer as the irrigators buy fewer goods and services. Shops will close and people will leave town.

Aboriginal community member: All we're saying is that there needs to be enough water flowing through our land – through the rivers, waterways and wetlands. This will enable us to continue our relationship with the land. Some say the water is like the blood flow of the land, and just as the loss of blood causes problems for the human body, our culture suffers without water.

Irrigation farmer: The Basin Plan will encourage irrigators to use water more carefully. With government assistance we can invest in the latest irrigation technology. This will eventually save us money and make my farm more sustainable. The plan represents an opportunity, rather than a threat.

Conservationist: The Basin Plan does not go far enough. The amount of water to be returned to the river is not enough to protect the river system's fragile wetlands and red gum forests. We need to reject this plan and demand a better one – a plan that puts the interest of the environment first.

Irrigation farmer: The Basin Plan will be a disaster. Our business relies on a plentiful supply of cheap water. I don't want to go to all the expense of installing water-efficient irrigation equipment. I have my children's school fees to pay. I can't be too concerned about the long-term sustainability of my farming practices.

Adelaide resident: The security and quality of Adelaide's water supply will continue to be threatened if the Plan is not implemented. Water quality in the South Australian section of the river system is threatened by upstream land uses. Salinity is a particular problem. An increase in the river system's environmental flow will help flush the salt from the river and bring new life to our wetlands.

Queensland irrigator: We don't need a plan to better manage the water resources of the basin. What we need are big dams in northern Australia – dams that can capture and store the summer rains. We can then pipe the water into the catchment. We could then expand the area of food-producing land.

Hydrologist: The Basin Plan is a good start. It returns water to the system and this must be good for the river. It will help reverse years of over-allocation to irrigators. The hydrology and ecology of the river system, currently threatened, will have a chance to recover.

Local tourism operator: The Murray's potential as a tourist attraction will be greatly enhanced by a more reliable supply of water. The wetlands and associated birdlife will flourish. The river red gums, which are stressed from years of drought, will recover. Locals underestimate the economic benefits of tourism.

Supplier of irrigation technologies: The Basin Plan allows for up to 650 billion litres of water to be recovered to come from environmental works and measures such as pumping and piping water into wetlands. We have the equipment and expertise to do this. Government funding for such works will enable us to grow our business and employ more people.

Sydney talkback radio shock-jock: Another government disaster! Water is being stolen from irrigators because the government is too gutless to tell South Australia to take a hike. To hell with the so-called environmental flow! This is the country's food-basket and our irrigators need the water to grow food. Who cares about a few wetlands! South Australians can drink desalinated water.