

**From:** [Ray Anker](#)  
**To:** [Water Inquiry](#)  
**Subject:** Water allocations and Environmental flows  
**Date:** Thursday, 6 August 2020 4:26:33 PM

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Dear Sir/Madam,

The present system has reduced the Riverina farming area to a fraction of its past, and if it continues it will be reduced to a cereal cropping area only with all towns along the river reduced to ghost towns at best.

I have fished in the Murray for around 70 years and at times in the past the river was reduced to a small flows due to long dry summers and drought periods but the red gum forests along its banks were never threatened but today with the increase in water flows it has silted up the Barmah choke, flooded the surrounding forest, and any person who has been involved with plant life will tell you that over watering will in time kill plants and I believe that this will be the case with the Barmah forest. Also look at the banks along the river and what it is doing to the trees on the riverbanks. By continuing to water trees and not allow its roots to penetrate deep into the subsoil for moisture any strong water flows or high winds will cause them to fall.

Why is the environmental flows utilised in filling billabongs along the river, at the expense of the irrigators as the birds that can now been seen in the extra flows to billabongs and wastelands were previously in the river and irrigation system. They have not just turned up.

The water appears to be utilised for water sports for the large city populations, and the flows through to the South Australian sea mouth is a complete waste of resources. The amount that is lost to evaporation by the time it reaches SA would equate to around 50% , the lake in SA was a salt lake but is now a fresh water lake, and there is lot of water wasted by allowing it to flow to the sea. If you considered placing some of the water flows back to above the choke, in affect it would only take 50% of each mg to what is presently going out to sea or keeping the salt lakes as fresh water due to losses caused by evaporation.

Along the Murray river the almond growers have taken more water than they should have without any consideration of either the existing farmers, especially dairying which employed thousands of people in the past and now reduced to a mere shadow of its past. A number of other large players have been buying along the irrigation areas and forced many small farmers out of the market. They are buying both the land and any attached water allocations.

There has been no State planning in the past nor appears to be happening now to restrict these large players and put the smaller players on a better footing. The Malwala channel is utilised to take extra water flows below the choke, but firstly who paid for the dams in NSW and Victoria. Who paid for the channel systems, and now the irrigators in NSW and Victoria have to continue to pay for the channel upkeep at their expense to the benefit of the larger players, and SA.

I would like to see a part of the environmental water be put back to the farmers but on the condition that water is utilised to increase the treed areas on those farms with a portion given as payment for the change in utilisation of the land to trees. It would have a great beneficial affect on the environment and I believe also increase

production to the farmers and assist in the reduction of the affect of climate change to this area.

I would also like to see a change back to the water allocations for farmers, with water attached to farms and some loan system to assist farmers to purchase back some of these allocations. There could be a win to the environment, climate change and the farmer sector.

I would urge those reviewing the system look at what dramatic affect this irrigation change has done to the agricultural scene in the past 15/20 yrs, and try to envisage of what it could again be if there was vision and with some encouragement to the irrigators, careful planning and on what it could be to all Australians. We need the farmer section but in the past few decades they have not had a fair go.

We do not have many times in our lives to make a difference to our country and would urge you to please consider carefully the issues as it will have great ramifications on the farming sector, towns along the rivers, and the Australian economy as a whole.

regards,

Ray Anker

A Finley Dairy Farmer