Introdution

My name is Les Hill and I have lived and worked in Berri, in South Australia Riverland for 26 Years.
I have just retired from the Berri Barmera Council after 30 years as a Councillor
I have been a member of the Murray Darling Association for 22 years and was Chairman and a National Board member for 16 years. I am still a member of the Riverland Region 5 as a past Chairman, I am also a Life Member of this organization, and over the years attended almost every meeting concerning water and the environment.
I am also a member of the Chowilla Reference Group through the NRM Board Riverland.
I attended the meetings convened by the MDBA ("the Authority") jn Renmark in late October and November 16th 2010. I have Volume 1 and Volume 2 parts 1,1I.and III Of the Guide to the proposed Basin Plan (" the Guide")

First Submission: Equal reductions in the Murray Region are inappropriate- reductions should be fact based and logical and produce the optimal result for the environment, the economy and Communities.

Three areas of the Murray Darling Basin("the MDB") are relevant to this Submission.They are

- The SA Murray.
- The Victorian Murray.
- The NSW Murray.

At page xxiv of Volume 1 of the guide, the Authority proposes a range of reductions in the current diversion limits of 26- 35% for each of these regions.

The meeting on the 16th November 2010 Mr Freeman ,CEO of the Authority said that this was done because the States had agreed to it. This is not the case but I if such an agreement existed, it would be contrary to the Water Act 2007 (cth) this inquiry should ensure that the Authority is making recommendations based on the provisions of the Water Act, not spurious references to an agreement

In setting the SDLs, the Authority should take into account:

(i)the fact that South Australia's existing irrigation infrastructure is already efficient

By way of a brief history, in the 1970s South Australia began converting all open channels into underground pipes from the River to the farm gate. That process finished in the early1980's
In particular, there is no longer any open channels or flood irrigation in South Australia, including the Lower Murray. As a result South Australia irrigation infrastucture is already efficient.

(ii) the fact that as South Australian irrigation infrastructure does not need upgrading, there are no efficiencies to be gained in the SA Murray from the $5.8 Billion.

(iii) the fact that the Victorian and NSW Murray regions do not already have Efficient infrastucture.

(iv) the fact that the $5.8 Billion is available to Victorian and NSW Murray irrigators to upgrade

their infrastructure and create efficiencies.

(v) the fact that there is more irrigation (both in absolute and relative terms) in the Victorian and NSW Murray regions.

Taking all of these together, I submit it is both logical and within the provisions of the Water Act that greater reductions are imposed where there is greater existing inefficiency. This is plainly in the Victorian and NSW Murray regions those regions are able to draw on the $5.8Billion to improve their infrastructure and thus absorb the reductions through efficiency improvements. (in contrast, South Australia has no capacity to absorb reductions through efficiency improvements.)

Accordingly, I submit that to impose the same reductions on the South Australian Murray as on the Victorian and NSW Murray, is illogical, contrary to the of the WaterAct and plainly inequitable

Second Submission: Financial and technical assistance for crop changes.

Assistance to change crops should be given to South Australian irrigators who wish to do so.

The assistance should include:

(i) Agriculture or Horticulture studies to work out which crops are suitable for growing in the South Australian Murray Region.

In particular, the climate change and wineries not requiring some of the varieties,growers will have to change their plantings, some may change to growing vegetables.
There is talk of a world shortage of food. The Riverland has a large food processing plant empty, Formerly (National Foods of Australia) plus several packing sheds of which could be utilized if growers are given assistance by the Commonwealth Government.

(ii) Market research to work out if there is a market for crops and if so, whether entering that market would be economically viable

(iii) When the appropriate crop or crops are identified (as above) assistance should include funding for each irrigator to remove the crop and plant new crop.

(vi) Some level of income support may need to be given to irrigators during the first cycle of the new crop.

Les Hill