Dear Senators,

I recently listened to a live radio grab where Mr. Alan Jones saying his two bobs worth on the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) who have recently issued a guide to the plan on how to "fix" the MDB.

A few weeks ago, the public consultation that goes with this plan, grabbed attention of the national media where we saw wild scenes of Griffith irrigators, and those who provide services to Agriculture in Griffith, articulating their displeasure at the flaws in the guide.

Whilst not as wild as Griffith, the meetings I attended in St. George, Dalby and Goondiwindi had plenty of passion, and plenty of angst and perhaps a little more intellect and composure. In reading the document circulated at this meeting – the Guide To The Murray Darling Basin Authority – I noted several issues that caught my eye.

My two favourite issues are on the following pages:

Page 93 – the MDBA admits that there will be extra welfare dependency as a result of reduction in water allocation for irrigation use.
Page 197 – the MDBA also admits that in constructing this report - that includes the forecast made on page 93 - that it has done no post farm gate analysis on the impacts to the communities as a whole.

Assuming we accept that the science is right – which many more eminently qualified than me share my view and don't – this government has a $5.8b budget, funded by all Australian taxpayers, allocated to MDBA in the name of Environment. It has spent thus far $400m buying water allocations from farmers thus far, and has provisions for "adjustment" packages for those affected (i.e. welfare handouts).

My thoughts on this are:

First of all, for a mere $800m ***we***, (the nation I guess, as this is a Federal issue now…) could have (and still could if we wanted to) piped Brisbane's wastewater to Toowoomba for release into the Darling Downs irrigation system to stabilize delivery of irrigation water which in turn could supply "environmental flows" through the Condamine river in 2003. If we add a little for inflation and take a little off for increase technology and I reckon in 2010 terms we are talking about $1.1b. Instead the Brisbane City Council and Qld Government spent $2.0b on upgrading the treatment works (to remove Nitrogen and Phosphorus which have massive benefits to crops under irrigation) so they could continue to dump it out to Moreton Bay. How "environmental" is that ? How commercial is that ? How good a job of governance is that ?

Secondly, the Clarence, Macleay and Nimboida Rivers in Northern NSW has a massive amount of water available to them. There are credible engineered solutions available to divert some of that water into Darling Basin headwaters to also supplement "environmental flows" whilst keeping these rivers sustainable. None of these are under consideration.

Thirdly, in an effort to keep the wetlands wet, the MDBA recommends purchase of water to feed these important wetlands. Rather than throw water at the problem – at the expense of the irrigators and their communities – why doesn't the government spend a little change out of the $5.8b and clean up the wetlands for a start ? A current example is well documented with the rehabilitation of the Macquarie marshes where removal of woody weed, livestock and feral animals made vast improvements to the wetlands without throwing water at the problem.

Here are but three examples that fuel my disappointment with our (previously Qld State, but now…)

Federal Government. Surely a couple of the Billions of dollars set aside for purchase of water could be better used in stimulating the water availability to the border rivers and therefore Darling basin.

We all should be disappointed that our government – the one that we installed as custodian of our tax dollars, among other things - chooses to spend tax payer dollars to appease the environmental lobby with a direct yet unmeasured collateral result of this quest being the suppression of rural communities in which we live.

Would it not be better for a government to be proactive and ***add*** water to the system, yet at the same time freezing allocations, and enjoy a net effect of more reliable water flows for irrigators and the environment ? We have heard from Qld Premier Bligh that the SE corner of Qld is struggling to keep infrastructure up despite a high level of resources royalty income. Adding to regional water security would bless the state and federal governments, and the environment, with more reliable water flows through the system, underpinning the regional economy generating jobs, increasing tax revenue, decreasing welfare dependency.

Surely the stimulation of rural communities would be more progressive option than this socialist repressive option that the government has tabled.

Put in a less eloquent manner: the federal government is spending tax payer dollars to reduce production, increase welfare dependency and destroy rural communities to appease an ill informed minority.

This will affect everyone in Australia. Not just communities near and dear to my heart such as St. George, Dirranbandi, Goondiwindi - just three on the NSW/QLD border. It affects every tax payer in Australia because their tax dollars are funding this socialist repressive advance on primary industry that have fed the nation and in the past have well paid its fair dues to the tax man.

The current presence of water in the MDBA has nothing to do with water reforms from this government; it's called the breaking of the 10 year drought. And before all my South Australian friends commence their hate mail back to me, consider this fact: 4% of the water that goes out the Murray mouth is from the Darling originating from Qld. The Darling contributes 17% of the water that enters the Murray. It's pretty hard to blame a Qld irrigator for poor water in the Murray. It is equally inappropriate to congratulate this government for any "water reform" because it is simply not true !

Senator Wong and the Federal Government had absolutely nothing to do with the breaking of the 10 year drought in Western NSW and SW Qld, yet her personal crusade in the name of the environment has already had a massive negative impact on rural communities. However this crusade did not add any water to the MDBA because there was no water in the first place due to the drought. If that sounds like a scene out of *Yes Minister* to you, then it's due to the bureaucratic madness that Senator Wong set up in appointing the MDBA – a bunch of public servants handpicked to deliver an outcome that met her personal views – however misguided – on this issue. Her successor has sent out the MDBA CEO and Chair to meet the people – sacrificial lambs to the slaughter rather than face the music himself.

However, let's not argue science here, lets set aside the discussion about whether the science is right. This is about bad government. This government is spending our tax dollars frivolously on yet another poorly conceived initiative that will increase welfare dependency, reduce production and therefore GDP, and therefore is tax revenue base. All the time hiding behind "environment" and the MDBA's execution of the Water Act.

Increases in the cost of food, a skewing of the balance of payments, a bleed on the welfare system,

reduction in the taxation base on a State and Federal level affect all Australians, not just those who live in the rural communities.

Australians must make a stand about this, because this my friends, is government gone mad.