G’day,

I write to you concerned about the proposed Basin Plan.

This year my partner and I bought a house in Leeton, where we’ve lived for the last year and a half. Leeton is heavily dependent on irrigated agriculture and the town is likely to experience substantial social and economic impacts under the proposal.

Leeton has a fantastic community and, for a single income family like mine, it’s one of the few places where we could buy into the Australian dream of home ownership. Since the Guide to the proposed Basin Plan was released in October, I’ve worried whether this investment was wise. It has literally kept me awake some nights.

It concerns me that the proposed Plan focuses on environmental outcomes at the expense of social and economic interests, as well as the food security of Australia.

When Leeton was developed as part of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (MIA) nearly one hundred years ago, it was part of a plan to grow our country’s population and reduce the risk of famine.

The MIA has achieved these aims and more with the region now contributing nearly 40% of NSW’s vegetable production. However, I once read there is less than 12 weeks supply of food at any time on our planet and I’m also aware Australia’s population continues to grow, so I believe the MIA must continue to play an important role into the future.

The proposed Basin Plan also concerns me because of its flaws.

The first volume hadn’t been out for very long before the MDBA acknowledged it was likely that there would be more jobs lost than stated in the Guide to the proposed Basin Plan. Many in Leeton are fearful there would be more than the estimated 800 full-time jobs lost within our town alone. The destruction this would cause to Leeton’s community is a depressing thought and one which raises the issue of ensuring adequate support for communities affected by the Basin Plan, should it be adopted by government.

I gather the calculations for environmental water are also flawed through using flood scenarios for distribution without consideration of neither the practicalities nor the efficiency of this option.

Please understand that I am not opposed to providing more water for the environment. I am concerned about the proposed Basin Plan’s impact upon food prices, local employment, our community and Australia’s future. There must be a better way to meet all of these interests and hopefully it will involve upgrading infrastructure rather than buying back water from debt-stressed farmers because the former will create jobs while the latter will remove them from communities such as Leeton’s.

Regards,

Jason Richardson