

## Chair Report 2024



Thank you to those who were able to make it to the 2024 Speak Up AGM. Today is the second time I have stepped down as chair of this great organisation - a decision which, again, has been hard to make.

The last 12 months of advocacy for our rural communities have been challenging, despite all our best efforts to provide facts and figures to our political leaders, they have fallen on deaf ears. The federal Minister is determined to recover volumes of water, despite the consequences to rural communities, staple food production and the environment.

Over the last 6 months in particular, we have worked very closely with the Murray Regional Strategy Group (MRSRG), this connection, along with our own credibility has seen our organisation represented at meetings with –

- Alluvium (Review of MDBA communication during 2022 floods)
- Minister Rose Jackson
- Member for Murray Helen Dalton
- Member of Legislative Council Rikkie Lee-Tyrrell
- Minister Harriet Shing
- And later in March Member for Albury Justin Clancy
- National Farmers Federation – to coordinate the simultaneous rallies across Griffith, Leeton and Deni
- Sth Basin meeting with GMID Water Leadership Forum and other organisation in the Sth Basin

Despite the disillusion we all feel with the current aggressive nature the Albanese Government is undertaking to implement the Basin Plan, the shimmer of light is the increased action from our peak groups. However, many do not understand the intricate nature of the Murray Valley, which is very poorly advocated for.

Thinking back over the past 8 years, it is hard to believe that our little band of water warriors has achieved so much, on such a shoestring budget. I am so proud to be recognised as the leader of Speak Up, and feel honoured that you have trusted me to be the voice of the most important people on the planet, family farmers and rural business owners.

There are so many people who I need to thank, and in doing so I risk missing someone. So, I would like to just highlight a big thank you to various committee members over the years for



your support and encouragement. To everyone who has become members or made donations to our various activities, without your generosity they would not have occurred.

To Sue Braybon, who has been secretary since the Convoy to Canberra. Sue has been amazing to work with, and nothing is ever too much trouble. Sue has efficiently taken care of all our finances and kept our membership up to date with communication, thank you Sue for making my job so much easier.

Last, but not least. The guy who has been with me since the conception of Speak Up, Garry Baker. Garry, I truly value the professional relationship and friendship we have developed over the nearly 9 years I have known you. Your dedication to advocating for rural communities and common sense has been inspiring. I know that we both don't feel the job has been completed, but for two basically volunteers, I think we have left no stone unturned. My only regret is I didn't get you that pay rise I promised!