

# Speak Up Campaign Inc.

Inc 1800187

[speakup4water@gmail.com](mailto:speakup4water@gmail.com)



## Senator the Hon Murray Watt

Minister for Water

PO Box 6100

Senate

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

[senator.watt@aph.gov.au](mailto:senator.watt@aph.gov.au)

February 23, 2023

Dear Minister Watts,

The Speak Up Campaign is reaching out to you on behalf of family owned and operated businesses and farms across northern Victoria and southern NSW, who are concerned about the impact on regional communities and environs as a result of the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

We want to ensure you are fully aware of the impacts of water recovery under buybacks to broader regional communities.

- While individual farmers might benefit in the short term, this does not flow onto manufacturing and food processing industries
- Reduced agricultural production results in fewer jobs in the service industries, like agronomists, truck drivers, weighbridge operators, dairy hands, crop dusters, header drivers and the list goes on
- This significantly impacts the population of regional towns, with fewer children attending schools, fewer teachers, fewer health care workers, fewer hairdressers and fewer retail outlets, resulting in fewer sporting teams and other social clubs
- The flow on impacts to regional communities are rarely taken into account in impact studies and report.
- Two studies funded by concerned community organisations highlight the significant impact of water recovery in northern Victoria and southern NSW, and this data is over 5 years old: [GMID Impacts](#) and [NSW Murray](#)
- The Murray Darling Basin Plan's own community profiles study highlighted the impacts on regional communities [MDBA Community Profiles](#), which was well above the predicted job losses made in the guide to the Murray Darling Basin Plan
- Economic and social impacts due to removing water from communities will not be seen until 5 to 8 years after the water is removed
- Recovering additional water is not going to address these environmental issues
  - How it is going to be delivered, when the Barmah Choke is already collapsing from high water flows?
  - River bank erosion
  - European Carp proliferation
  - Invasive weed spread from overbank flows
  - Private and public infrastructure damage caused by overbank flows
  - And the list goes on

Minister, I ask you four questions.

- Do you see a future for irrigated agriculture in Australia?
- Do you want people living in regional Australia?
- How are you advocating for irrigated agriculture and regional Australia within your government?
- When the next drought arrives, are you confident farmers will have enough water to grow affordable staple foods for Aussie families?

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In response to the latest water buyback announcement, a reasonable request was made by the NSW Irrigators Association:

“The (water) minister needs to be upfront about which communities and towns she wants to shut down to deliver her Basin Plan.”

Perhaps, as Agriculture Minister, you may like to also answer the question. Which towns are you prepared to shut down and how much agriculture are you prepared to sacrifice?

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shelley Scoullar".

Shelley Scoullar

(Chair – Speak up Campaign)