



The Hon. Sussan Ley MP

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Dear Minister Ley,

The beginning of a new decade has been met with an environmental disaster which has captured the nation's undivided attention and opinion, which we understand must be extremely stressful in the role your party has given you.

The environmental disaster which is occurring in your backyard does not attract the same media attention, and hence many Australians are unaware of the collapsing river banks along the Murray and its tributaries. We have river bank erosion and slumping which leads to the deposit of sediment in the water ways suffocating native aquatic species and destroying breeding sites for native wildlife, just to name one of the consequences of frequent and prolonged high river flows.

Surely the devastation caused by the recent fires is a signal that an overhaul of our Natural Resource Management (NRM) needs to be made. It is time to involve communities, who live and breathe land and water management and ensure they are treated as equals in the policy setting of NRM.

Our nation and future generations cannot afford the poor policy decisions which continue to plague land and water management. The current government must put the future of this country ahead of the next election and South Australian seats (we cannot think of any other reason why the Basin Plan is allowed to continue in the manner in which it is).

The fires have impacted every Australian to some degree and with this disaster comes an opportunity to address not only fire management, but our entire Natural Resource Management. There is an opportunity to review the Basin Plan and assess the opportunities to reduce the waste, protect our environment and prevent further people from losing their livelihoods for the wrong reasons.

Three areas which you can have an influence on in your role, which we would support are: –

- Attribute conveyance losses to the environment. In January 2019 you yourself said – “The issue of losses must be confronted: it is patently unfair that users downstream effectively have their water ‘delivered’ to them with the cost of transmission paid for by us.”
- Support the bill being put to government by Senator Davey, Damian Drum MP and Anne Webster MP, calling for environmental water in certain drought scenarios to be made available for productive use.
- Call for a broad ranging Royal Commission into Natural Resource Management in Australia. The devastation cause by poor water management can be as destructive as fire, it is just not as instant and graphic.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and discuss these and other solutions to the crisis which is engulfing your electorate.

Yours faithfully

Shelley Scoullar - Chair