



April 22nd 2018

Dear Senators of the Australian Parliament,

I am contacting you on behalf of the Speak Up Campaign, which this month held a Water Forum in Moama that was attended by a crowd of 300 including scientists, environmentalists, local government leaders, business and community leaders and politicians. Speak Up is a grassroots voice for rural communities and gained overwhelming support from those in attendance for our efforts to find a balance that protects both our communities and the environment we live in and cherish.

Next month as a senator you will be asked to make a vote on whether or not to support the disallowance of the Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism (SDLAM).

While our organisation has many concerns about the Basin Plan, including the restrictive timeframes and approaches to its implementation, there is no reason to prevent the SDLAM as a broad principle being introduced.

It is important to understand that any opposition to the SDLAM in the Southern Basin will create further damage to the Southern Basin, in particular to irrigated agriculture in the Goulburn Valley and NSW Murray region where the most water has been recovered. MDBA analysis shows population declines and job losses of up to 50 per cent in these rural communities in the past seven years, most of which is attributed to impacts of the Basin Plan.

At our Water Forum those in attendance supported our Balanced Options to the Basin Plan, this included the following option for implementing the SDLAM –

A commitment that Sustainable Diversion Limit (SDL) projects will be flexible, adaptive, with capacity for new projects to be included. Projects must allow for relevant community input into design and development and enable the inclusion of complementary measures to attain a suite of environmental outcomes.

This approach to developing new or adapting existing projects would reflect a capacity to achieve project objectives and deliver more strategic outcomes for the environment in a timely fashion. It is important to understand that any opposition to the SDLAM will create further damage to the Southern Basin, particularly the Goulburn and Murray Valleys.

It is important to recognise any public concerns about the continuing decline of the Lower Darling and Barwon Darling River system remains a critical issue, however this needs to be addressed directly in the Northern Basin. Disallowing the SDLAM will not solve the problems of the Darling River. The Lower Darling receives its water resource from the Northern Basin, which has contributed 17% of the water recovered under the Basin Plan to date.

The southern Basin has contributed 83% of water recovered for environmental flows so far under the Basin Plan, and therefore it is critical that the SDLAM as a principle is supported with the need to have more flexibility built in to decisions.

This is our nation's plan, it is greatly impacting our rural communities and our food and fibre producers. We must get the balance right. As a Senator, you have the power to minimise the devastating impacts to rural communities while at the same time maximising environmental outcomes.

Yours Sincerely,

Shelley Scoullar
Chair - Speak Up Campaign Inc
0414 960 785