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**Murray Valley
Private Diverters
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**Upper Goulburn
River Catchment
Landholders**

**Wakool Rivers
Association**



**The Hon Murray Watt
Minister for the Environment and Water**

House of Representatives

Parliament House

Canberra ACT

Minister.watt@dcceew.gov.au

September 26, 2025

Dear Minister Watt,

We are writing to raise urgent concerns about carp proliferation and the environmental damage being caused by this introduced species to our river systems.

Of immense concern is the lack of government action to address the problem, as well as water management processes which are, in fact, helping to grow European carp numbers and thus exacerbating it.

This is an issue of immense importance to our environment, food security, and way of life, and it is essential that all parliamentary representatives understand its implications and are prepared to advocate for remedial action.

Why are carp an environmental issue?

- Carp have caused the **loss of native aquatic plants**, which are the filters of the river system.
- Carp **increase river turbidity** due to the way they feed, they are bottom feeders stirring up the river bed.
- More **water will not fix** the loss of aquatic plant life and high turbidity levels.

The Murray–Darling Basin Authority’s **2025 Sustainable Rivers Audit** ([link here](#)) highlights significant and ongoing problems:

- Fish health is rated “**very poor to poor**” in **20** of the 23 valleys in the Basin, with carp (rather than low environmental water availability) a major contributing factor.
- Despite some reduction in carp biomass, carp still account for more than half of total fish biomass, maintaining a **substantial ecological footprint** in many catchments.

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The Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder reported in July 2024 that:

- Carp now make up **90% of total fish biomass** in some areas of the basin, as reported here - [Carp and water for the environment - DCCEEW](#)

We sought expert advice to validate these concerns, which confirmed our interpretation of the findings. Despite management efforts and environmental water recovery, native fish populations continue to decline while carp remain overwhelmingly dominant.

Key Conclusions from the Audit

Floodplain Flows Drive Carp Recruitment

- Both natural and managed floodplain inundation (e.g. environmental watering of wetlands) support carp and native fish. However, in systems with high carp populations, spring floods disproportionately boost carp recruitment.
- Repeated artificial inundations pose a high risk of expanding carp populations and spreading them into river channels.

Environmental Flow Management

- In-channel flows are generally more favourable for native fish, while floodplain inundation increases carp risks unless carefully managed.
- Site-specific carp management plans are urgently needed, particularly for floodplain and wetland areas vulnerable to carp recruitment.
- River and wetland managers must balance the vital objectives of environmental watering with targeted carp control in high-risk floodplain zones.

Why This Matters

Uncontrolled carp populations undermine ecological restoration, threaten native fish recovery, and jeopardise the productivity of our river systems. This, in turn, affects food affordability, regional economies, and the nation's agricultural contribution to Gross Domestic Product.

Unfortunately, as we roll out the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, its environmental watering targets are providing ideal conditions for European carp breeding.

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Unless carp management is prioritised, continued implementation of Basin Plan water recovery and floodplain inundation risks **delivering marginal or even negative outcomes for river health and native fish.**

What must be done

We urge you and your colleagues to:

1. **Challenge current management practices** that inadvertently fuel carp proliferation.
2. **Ensure targeted carp control measures** are integrated into Basin Plan implementation.
3. **Require site-specific carp risk assessments and management plans** for floodplain watering projects.
4. **Collaborate with scientists and draw on local knowledge**, enabling informed decisions about how regulators and infrastructure are used for future projects,

Protecting our rivers from carp is not optional. It is essential to securing the ecological integrity of the Murray–Darling Basin, the recovery of native fish, and the prosperity of the communities and industries that depend on these waters.

Sincerely,

Shelley Scoullar

Chair Speak Up Campaign

0414960785

On Behalf of the organisations listed