

April 19th 2018

The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP
Prime Minister Australia
Parliament House Canberra
ACT

Dear Mr Turnbull

On Friday April 13, 2018 our organisation, the community based Speak Up Campaign Inc., hosted a water forum at the Moama Bowling Club, on the Murray River in southern New South Wales. The forum was addressed by a range of scientists, economists, community leaders, politicians and farming leaders who provided valuable information to a packed auditorium of attendees on various aspects of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

Concern was expressed at the meeting that the Basin Plan is not delivering the balanced social, economic and environmental objectives that were promised during its development phase. In fact, there are serious social and economic consequences in our Southern Basin communities which are most greatly impacted and hamstrung by the Basin Plan.

However, there was an important positive aspect which was highlighted on Friday ie. there are options to achieve the social, economic and environmental balance which is so vital to the Basin Plan's success. All that is needed is for politicians to listen, understand the needs of the Basin and its communities and take proactive steps towards achieving the balance (which surely must be everyone's aim).

The first motion overwhelmingly supported at the forum on Friday stated:

- No further acquisition of water in the Southern Basin

The second motion overwhelming supported was:

- Indisputably Balance the Plan - Prime Minister, Basin State Water Ministers and Premiers to meet with representatives from Speak Up so that our balanced options can be presented on behalf of the grassroots community.

We therefore respectfully request your office organise this meeting at which we will present our options and discuss ways to achieve adjustments to the Basin Plan that will ensure our communities contribute to the national economy, rather than continue to decline.

Our Open Water Forum also supported the following:

- No further acquisition of water from the Southern Basin because we do not believe this can occur without further detrimental social and economic consequences.

- The Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) and Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH) to demonstrate the environmental benefits of the water already held in environmental accounts.
- An assessment of what volumes can actually be physically and safely delivered in the Murray, Goulburn and Murrumbidgee Rivers without causing negative social or economic impacts.
- A revision of Basin Plan flow targets to South Australia and re-evaluation of flow contributions from the Darling River.
- 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.
- All regions across the entire Murray Darling Basin are brought up to equal standard for compliance, metering and measurement of water, by installing telemetry and metering in regions which are under metered.
- Investment in localised projects at the end of system to address South Australia's concerns associated with the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth with more sustainable solutions. Revise current Basin Plan reliance on additional flows down the Murray River from mountain catchments.
- Investigation of these localised projects in South Australia to incorporate the option of an additional lock in South Australia (Lock Zero) to better manage Lower Lakes in times of extended drought periods.

Mr Turnbull, we fully appreciate your busy schedule and the inherent difficulties associated with organising the meeting with Water Ministers and Premiers as requested. However, with \$13 billion of taxpayer funds at stake, being spent on a plan that is crippling our regional communities, we consider this to be of the utmost importance.

We respectfully request this matter receive urgent attention to achievably adjust a Basin Plan that was developed with the right intentions but is failing the communities it promised to protect.

Yours faithfully



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Chair – Speak Up Campaign Inc.

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