

# The Murray - Darling Rivers – a solution

## INTRODUCTION

Every Australian who lives along the Darling/Murray river system wants the river to be healthy, full of fish and still able to provide the cities, towns and farms with water. Not one of them wants the river catchment used as an excuse to stop farming or impose huge water taxes, irrigation license fees, minuscule quotas, and outlandish recreational fees and restrictions. The desires of all can be met by a scheme so simple that it is hard to believe it was not done years ago. The plan is to inject water into the river source. The water is there and the money is there. The manpower is sitting idle.

### PLEASE READ THIS PROPOSAL

If you like the idea get it to the genuine greenies who love the river and have the brains to realise that we need productivity and activity as well as protection of our environment. Get it to the unions and the students. With massive support we can pressure politicians into doing something other than tax us. Nothing will happen without pressure from the people.

## Saving the Rivers

We can save the rivers by increasing the water flow. The Weekend Australian – 16 Feb 2002 said, “The Murray River is Dying.” This overall plan is to desalinate the River system by pumping fresh water into the headwaters of the river in Qld.

## The Advantages

The salt goes. The algae goes. The crops get water. The fish don't die.

The river is saved. The greenies are happy. The farmers are allowed to earn a living, and the towns along the Murray in SA, western NSW and southern rural Qld will all prosper. We need to introduce sensible green policies. Help the people along the Murray Darling river system. Provide jobs for Australian youth and adults, reduce taxes and boost the national economy

## Prior Knowledge Needed

Coal powered stations have to be capable of producing the peak load but they work better on a constant load. Hydro generators work well on any load and they can be used as a pump to lift water.

## Energy

The surplus energy of a coal powered station can push water high in off peak load periods, and let it fall during peak loads. This is how the Snowy works.

## Cost Factors

The peak load hydro power station requires no power source so it's cheap to build. A 300 megawatt coal powered station costs \$800 million. Qld is already building new coal powered stations to cater for peak loads which will have even more unused off peak capacity. This plan doesn't require a new power station. It's already there and operating with huge unused capacity during off peak periods.

## **Geography**

Fraser Island is only 200 km from the headwaters of the Murray-Darling system, less than the distance from Perth to Kalgoorlie. The island has a high annual rainfall.

This gives it a water catchment equal to the low rainfall of the larger Darling catchment. The water from Fraser Island currently flows into the sea - just wasted. The water is so pure that it is exported as pure spring water (with no chemicals). The Tarong coal fired station is very close to the proposed project, with others at Biloela and Millmerran close by.

## **The Brainwave**

As I drove inland from the coast through the Great Dividing Range between Kingaroy and Bell in Qld, I went up a valley on the eastern side, through a pass, into a valley on the western side of the range and encountered a sign which said, "You are now in the Murray Darling Catchment".

I thought, if only we could inject fresh water into the river at this point, the Murray/Darling could give water to the inland without being so depleted that it almost ceased to flow. The states would not need to fight for a share of the scarce water. I remembered the unlimited water rushing into the sea from Fraser Island. I had in my mind's eye a picture of Bogimbah Creek when I last swam in it. It was 20 metres wide, one metre deep – crystal clear water, flowing at about 6 kph.

What would the farmers on the Murray/Darling give for that water, why should they give anything, it's theirs, it's part of Australia, and it's there for all Australians. I pondered the Perth to Kalgoorlie pipeline, put there in the horse and buggy era.

I pictured the pipes at the Hoover Dam in USA put there half a century ago, and thought of the unemployed in Australia, and thought - WHY NOT?

## **The Plan**

If we put a dam in the Bunya Mountains we can feed it through one vertical pipe with the electric pump at the bottom of that pipe. The pump gets its water through a gate valve on the eastern side, from Fraser Island during times when the power stations have unused generating capacity.

During peak periods the gate valve is shut and a second gate valve on the western side is opened. As the water discharges the pump generates the electricity needed during peak periods. This would obviate the need to build another coal-powered station to meet current and predicted electricity needs. The water flows into the Murray/Darling system to revitalize it on its journey to the sea in S.A.. The majority of the money is already there in the \$1.4 billion the federal government has granted to save the Murray River. We don't need to do earthworks on Fraser Island. We simply put a wall around the mouth of

Bogimbah Creek and pump from there. The Pacific Ocean won't even notice the drop-in-the-ocean we divert.

It will get to the ocean via S. A. and through evaporation and the constant flow will top up the Artesian Basin. There are about ten freshwater creeks that could be diverted into the Murray/ Darling from Fraser Island. The island is only 14 km from the mainland. Even that first 14 km pipe would be vital. That would solve the water shortage problems for Hervey Bay city.

### **Other Considerations**

Other federal funding would be available from the Work-for-the-Dole schemes. Instead of laying 18th century paving stones, planting shrubs and playing silly games that amuse bureaucrats, our youth could be engaged in real work getting real skills and improving their self esteem.

### **Training**

The training opportunities would be endless. The instructors from TAFE could be employed teaching on-the-job skills needed in the construction and to maintain and repair the equipment. Opportunities would be created for older workers on-the-scrap-heap to train youngsters as hydraulic technicians, diesel mechanics, auto electricians, plant operators, surveyors, crane operators, welders, fitters, turners, riggers, drivers, etc.

### **Equipment**

Unused earth moving equipment from every shire could be used. This is better than having equipment sitting idle and it is an inexpensive way of contributing to a vital project.

### **Manufacture**

Our manufacturing industry would get a welcome boost to make pipes, pumps, structures, and footings etc. This could revitalize Australia's engineering and manufacturing .

### **Flow On**

Temporary towns would be created. This would create employment for carpenters, painters, plumbers, drainers, and electricians. Nearby rural towns will be revitalized as they supply the temporary towns. Suicide rates of our youth will decrease. Jobs would be created in the service, entertainment, food and transport industries.

### **Would there be opposition?**

The Federal government has allocated \$1.4 billion to solve the salination problem, however, here is a hidden agenda to federalise the Murray. The major parties are party to an international agreement to "privatise" water and make it a "commodity". This means that water is traded on the Futures Market like every other commodity. The catchments are leased or sold to the highest bidder (always foreign multi-nationals). The multinationals then sell the water to farmers and to city ratepayers AT A PROFIT OF COURSE.

The major parties are also party to an agreement to privatise National Parks. Fraser Island is a World Heritage listed national park. The parties cannot admit that we no longer own

and/or have a say in the utilisation of resources on Fraser Island. We are putting them in a position where they have to repudiate the agreement or admit to the Australian people that it exists.

There is also a plan to expunge our national debt by handing our national parks to the IMF in a debt-for-equity swap. The parks have already been valued and are listed on the World Assets Register. Federal politicians might be embarrassed if they had to start using assets they have pledged to the IMF. Having the river system owned by the four states and keeping it out of federal hands means there is less chance of the major parties selling the whole river system to foreign interests.

They have sold our oil, gas, ports, coal, metal, gems, minerals, shipping, airports, air lines, rail, buses, trams, ferries and trucking, electricity, phone, radio, TV, newspapers, satellites, Internet services, tourist resorts, hotels, motels, marinas, major shops, banks, insurance, stock exchange, public utilities such as water sewerage, garbage, electricity distribution, our defense industries, our Army, Navy and RAAF, repair, maintenance, security, cooking, provisioning, accommodation, coastal patrols and even the workers' superannuation schemes. Even the rain that falls in water catchments has been declared A COMMODITY. This means the multinationals can buy rain in good times through the Futures Market and sell it back to the farmers in bad times at a huge profit.

### **Licensing**

Annual license fees never achieve anything but a proliferation of bureaucrats, bean counters, inspectors, legislative and regulatory nightmares and hordes of hangers-on and parasites living by making the farmers and producers' lives a misery. Bruce Gunning, a Moree-based real estate agent who specialises in irrigation water, said: "Water is the fastest appreciating asset in rural Australia." In Moree in 1980 a standard 972M1 license was \$150,000. "They are now \$1.67 million, separating land and water titles will enable greater tradeability of the water." Mr Gunning said.

### **Forced Closure of Farms**

The government uses quotas to bring the farmers to such poverty they cannot keep going and can't find anyone crazy enough to buy a government-strangled farm. The government then gets generous. They offer to buy the farmer out and put him and his family on the dole in some dying town. The farm is then sold to foreign interests for a pittance to be held un-productive until the multinationals own all access to water supply. In some cases the farmer is retained as a share-farmer to work as a slave on less than award wages at the only trade he knows.

### **Control of Catchments**

The bulk of the state becomes quasi communist where the freeholder has no right to any say as to what he does on his property. To cut a tree, poison a weed, grade a road, or dig a hole invokes fines of \$40,000 in applications, delays, obstruction and rejections. The bureaucrats make sure no mistakes are made by making sure nothing gets done. They don't care if the farmers are starving to death for as long as they get their \$65,000 a year plus superannuation, early retirement etc.

### **Privatisation of Dams**

