



**SENATOR MALCOLM ROBERTS**  
**ONE NATION SENATOR**

# **PAUSE IT - FIX IT.**

## **A ONE NATION PLAN FOR THE MURRAY DARLING BASIN.**

***“Farmers are environmentalists.  
Irrigation water is environmental water.”***

During my campaign for my return to the Senate in 2018/19, I learnt of the hardships that farmers all over the Murray Darling Basin were experiencing through this drought.

Astonishingly, the water needed to sustain our farming communities through these tough times was reportedly being **wasted** by Federal and State bureaucracies, **on disastrous and wasteful** environmental projects at the expense of productive farming.

Upon being re-elected at the 2019 election, one of the priorities of my office was to understand the water crisis from the farmers' perspective, **listening to and learning** about how **the MDBA's plan** was working, and **not working**, in practice.

To get the knowledge needed from many perspectives, I undertook extensive travel through Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia over three trips. So far **there is an overwhelmingly consistent message**; the water crisis engulfing our rural regions within the MDB has been **caused by ill-conceived, politically motivated and unscientific government policy.**

I have a further week of investigation in the lower Darling next week, however it is already clear **we need to address** some serious faults within the current MDB plan.

## **OUR PLAN FOR THE MURRAY DARLING BASIN**

### **1. SAVE THE COORONG – RESTORE THE SOUTH EAST'S NATURAL FRESHWATER DRAINAGE**

Originally fresh water in South Australia's South East flowed to the Coorong and maintained the health of this important wetland. From 1864 South Australia built drains that diverted fresh water from the Murray Darling Basin and dumped it straight into the ocean.

This created productive farmland out of swamp land but caused the Coorong to become hypersaline. The Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH) has been wasting water from the Northern Basin to flush out the Coorong, causing considerable damage to the banks of the Murray, with no improvement in the Coorong. The South Australian Government has started turning these drains around to flush the Coorong from the East.

**One Nation supports restoring the natural boundaries and redirecting the drains to save the Coorong.**

### **2. MOVE NEW SUSTAINABLE DIVERSION LIMIT (SDL) ACQUISITIONS TO THE SOUTH EAST**

The MDBA is taking 450GL of farming water for the environment at a cost of \$1.5 billion. Farmers do not have 450GL to give. This measure will destroy agriculture and the communities for whom agriculture is their lifeblood.

The drains project recovery should count as SDL acquisition. The South Australian Government has already recovered 98GL and another 400GL is probable.

**One Nation will halt the SDL program throughout the Basin and give the \$1.5 billion to South Australia to complete the drain project and return that 500GL of water to the Basin as SDL acquisition.**

### **3. SAVE THE MENINDEE LAKES WETLAND**

Menindee Lakes are an internationally significant wetland known as the Kakadu of the

South. Fed by Queensland tropical storms, they hold water 8 out of every 10 years. The MDBA has decimated this amazing wetland by draining the 1700GL storage to try to flush the Coorong. This failed.

**One Nation believes the Menindee Lakes need to be returned to their natural water cycle by terminating the "new" Menindee plan, ending the practice of draining the lakes and restoring local water entitlements.**

### **4. RETURN 200GL OF WATER FROM THE NORTHERN BASIN TO IRRIGATION**

Minister Wong acquired 450GL in the Northern Basin for environmental flows, despite the NSW Government already allocating 72% of water for environmental use.

The Castlereagh, Gwydir and Macquarie rivers terminate in wetlands, and only flow through to the Darling in flood. This water is stranded. The CEWH is creating artificial wetlands to use this water and now proposes overland flooding to get a portion of the water into the Darling.

**One Nation supports the return of the 200GL of stranded environmental water to agriculture.**

### **5. A BETTER BALANCE FOR IRRIGATION WATER & LOWER PRICES**

The Minister should be able to maintain a balance in water use by refusing water licenses that distort the market and destroy the diversity in agricultural production that is critical to rural communities.

Speculators need to be taken out of the market to reduce prices. A longer term fix is required to correct distortions in the market caused by speculators and high value crops. These have negligible benefit to the local economy.

**One Nation will alter the water trading regulations to ensure temporary water licenses can only be purchased for agriculture. Longer term the distortion in pricing caused by corporate agriculture and speculators needs to be corrected.**

### **6. TRANSPARENCY IS CONFIDENCE**

There is inadequate transparency for MDB stakeholders, making it easy to find fault with

other valleys for their own lack of water. This lack of transparency and data for all stakeholders creates division and a lack of confidence and trust. This comes at a time when stakeholders need to come together to solve the real shortcomings in the Plan.

The MDBA are demanding farmers spend up to \$120,000 to add 2.5% extra accuracy to meters. This can wait. We want to know what water is coming into the Basin and how much water the Government is using in real time.

**One Nation will restore transparency by (i) requiring all unmetered farms and Government agencies, including the CEWH, to meter their water and make that data available online in real time, so that all stakeholders are able to monitor the system, (ii) auditing the existing SDL payments to ensure they meet their stated intent and are completed to standard, (iii) surveying flood plains to ensure any dams are properly approved and compliant, and (iv) implementing the online register of water licenses according to the MDBP.**

## **7. THE 'WATER FOR LIFE' WEIR PROJECT**

Town weirs hold back water that is critical to rural towns and to the myriad of wildlife they support. Developing weirs to increase water independence of rural and regional centres will improve rural resilience while creating local employment.

**One Nation will implement a Water for Life program to raise dam weirs to hold 5 years' supply.**

This will include local environmental projects like fish ladders and carp eradication. Funding will be provided from the Infrastructure Fund and be built through the local Council with a strong emphasis on local contractors.

## **8. THE LOWER LAKES WERE FRESH AND SALT**

The "Lower Lakes" – Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert, filled with fresh water from the Snowy in spring and early summer, and also from tropical storms coming down the Darling.

During extreme drought the Basin ran dry and sea water filled the lakes and lower Murray. This preserved the health of the water system and

kept the natural sulphur sediment in place.

**One Nation believes the Lower Lakes need to be treated as primarily fresh, with periods of sea inundation only during the most extreme droughts.**

## **9. BUILD LOCK ZERO AND PROTECT ADELAIDE'S WATER**

Protecting Adelaide's water supply is a high priority. During extreme drought any seawater entry into the lakes must be prevented from moving up the Murray.

This requires a new lock between Lake Alexandrina and the Murray. An irrigation channel is also required around the lakes to allow farmers to maintain production during such an event.

**One Nation supports building lock zero above Wellington and an irrigation canal around both sides of the lower lakes to allow irrigated farms to access water during periods of sea inundation.**

**The barrages will need to be upgraded to allow for more effective operation. Funding of up to \$1 billion will be made available from existing MDB funds for this package.**

## **10. BUILD DAMS**

Dam infrastructure is not keeping pace with Australia's population growth; we now have 10 million more Australians since we built our last major dam.

**One Nation is committed to dams being built as long-term solutions to drought-proofing Australia, and water trading will be tied to agricultural, industrial and community use.**



Want more information?  
See more details and our FAQ at  
[www.onenation.org.au/mdb](http://www.onenation.org.au/mdb)

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## WATER IS ESSENTIAL TO LIFE

Farming within the Murray Darling Basin system has been integral in the development of rural and regional Australia. The Basin provides Australia with some of the world's best agricultural and livestock products, and enables the prosperity that Australians enjoy today.

The intended aim of the Murray Darling Basin Plan, during drought, is to protect the environment, but it does not protect our farmers. The Australian environment and its flora and fauna have evolved adaptive and resilient strategies to survive during drought.

Our farming communities however cannot survive years of drought without a fair allocation of the available water.

Misguided environmentalism has left the Coorong and Menindee Lakes as disaster zones, stripped of their former beauty by the mismanagement of our water resources. One Nation's science-based approach will restore environments without the need for additional water.

## THE MURRAY DARLING BASIN



## I WANT YOUR THOUGHTS

I would appreciate your feedback on our Murray Darling Basin solutions. Please email me at [senator.roberts@aph.gov.au](mailto:senator.roberts@aph.gov.au) or get in touch on my social media.

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