

Natural Resources Commission

Submission to the Water Sharing Plan for the Gwydir Regulated River Water Source 2016

I am a landholder affected by this plan – my husband and I have 2 properties – one on the Gingham and one on the Lower Gwydir which are hugely impacted by the implementation of this plan. Whilst this plan was to provide for the environment and to support social, economic and cultural outcomes we have found the major stakeholder – the private landholder – has been negatively impacted by this plan and does not even get recognised – we are suffering from too much and off target watering which is inundating our farming land.

THINGS YOU NEED TO CHANGE TO THE WATER SHARING PLAN TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES.

The water sharing plan should be changed to include - **we will not inundate 3rd party farming land** – this will make our water managers accountable for the water they send down – we would also like to be compensated yearly for all of the off target water they are allowing to and knowingly inundate our farming land.

3T water needs to be reduced (LDorans attachment). With irrigation the water is funnelled into the existing wetland areas – the original flowpaths no longer carry the original bulk of the water – this was never scientifically factored into the 3T watering plan leaving our country being overwatered turning it sour and leaving our fields anerobic.

Our water manager filled in most of our stock and domestic drains for the delivery of the water so now some paddocks do not drain – apparently the Reconnecting Watercourse Country Programme is there to fix this issue however at this point the programme is not fit for purpose. Through lack of transparency they failed to advise us that they wish to send water at our main harvest period. This whole programme was based on drought data and there was not enough input into this programme by the major stakeholders – us – the landholders. Whilst \$33,000,000 is there for funding there should be a yearly rent on our farming land that gets inundated by excess and offtarget water.

We have recently learnt that Bird Watering events trumps all other rules – these are going for too long and do not enable farmers to get their land in order for planting. It has not allowed the Moree Conservation Area to get their fire breaks

in earlier enough to do a cool burn. We now have 10,000 ha of 2 years growth ready for a summer fireball. Our water managers keep sending water down but are not accountable for the negative effects. They are not listening to the landholders on the ground giving them advise. If we have summer storms and there is a lightning strike you will loose everything – animal, plant, ecological and cultural and all assets.

Our water managers have encouraged water into areas and now we are seeing flooding coming up to 3 days earlier.

The Gwydir River is the most altered river in Australia so I will list the water that comes onto us.

1. Copeton overflows at 100 percent – water has to be released – NSW water problem that ends up on me.
2. Tareelaro Weir – at between 10,000 – 15,000 megs per day the gates are lifted so all the water comes into the Gingham and Lower Gwydir
3. Supplementry water
4. Held Commonwealth Water
5. Held State Water
6. 3T
7. Fish water
8. 50% overland flow from irrigators
9. Surplus water that no one knows where it comes from
10. Overrun water from irrigation deliveries
11. Water from emptying Tyreel for maintenance
12. Rain water from the sky that is not scientifically factored into the water delivery equation
13. 5,000 megs to send down if there is a fire
14. Water to send down if there is a drought
15. Aboriginal water – for seasonal watering to come in 10 year plan
16. Ecological water – in the plan for the next 10 years
17. Bird watering events
18. Extra water for colonial bird breeding in the 10 year plan
19. Healing water for country

With all of these layers of water we find ourselves the dumping ground for water. This started in 2007 and has increased with no accountability for inundating landholders and loosing their crops.

[REDACTED] Glendara, Moree. NSW. 2400 [REDACTED]

1905 GOVERNMENT INQUIRY INTO RAFT PROBLEMS.

inundation by ordinary floods, I am informed by men of undoubted veracity (Mr. P. C. Watt, of Goonal, for example) that within their own personal knowledge a large proportion of this country was rich blue grass land, only flooded occasionally, and heavy carrying country. In those days the water course was not looked upon as being detrimental to the land, as the floodings were not numerous, nor were they excessive, and the reasons which would account, for the get-away of the water then would appear to be (1st) there was no 'raft' to stop the flow of the river, and (2nd) there was no large channel running off the Goonal branch into the Big Leather at such a level as to prevent much water from getting down the former channel and thence down the well defined channel of the Mehi into the Barwon: and I am of opinion that the best, cheapest, and most certain way to reclaim a large proportion of this now flooded country

is to bring the water back to its natural channel as soon as practicable by means of a cutting, of which particulars are given in the next paragraph.

11. EXISTING CHANNELS. — Once round the 'raft' and back into the Gwydir, the channel is well defined, and a fair size, until the N.E. corner of portion No. 20, parish of Cudgeldool, is reached (this is the point at which photograph No. 1 was taken), and this includes the five miles of new channel scoured out in 1893, which takes all the water from the Goonal branch. This can be better understood by a reference to photograph No. 2, taken at and showing the junction of the two channels. The depth of the new channel is 10 feet, and at the entrance of the Goonal branch, 6 feet (and this dwindles to nothing in half a mile): that is, that there has to be at least 10 feet of water in the new channel before it enters the Goonal branch. A fair idea of the general appearance of the new channel is given in photograph No. 3, taken at the eastern boundary of portion No. (66 parish

of Ballerana: the width here is 120 feet and the depth 14 feet. As this channel extends for some miles, I do not think the proposal of the Works Department to open up the

channel of the Goonal branch would now be feasible without a most expensive cutting. I doubt if any ordinary dam would hold at the junction of the Goonal branch, as there is 7½ feet cracky black surface soil which would melt away readily under the action of running water; and that cutting, if made, would be quite as long as the one I propose, and through worse country. From portion 20, parish of Cudgeldool, at which point the channel is about 40 font wide, and 6½ fret deep, westerly the channel gradually lessens till the Wandoona waterhole is reached, from which point there is no channel until near the west boundary of portion 8, parish of Pearse, a distance of about 35 miles. From portion 20, parish of Cudgeldool, a section of levels have been taken westerly to the N.E. corner of Goonal holding, and then south-westerly to the Goonal branch of the Gwydir, as shown by blue band on litho M. This section gives an average fall of about 2 feet 6 inches per mile, and I am of opinion that if a channel 6 feet deep and 6 feet wide at the bottom were made, with the spoil thrown on its western side somewhere in the position indicated by this section of levels, such a large body of water would be brought back to the natural channel that but a small quantity would be carried on to Curragundi, Midkin, and the holdings to the west which are now being ruined by being constantly flooded. The length of this cutting would be about 8¼ miles, and at its northern end would be about on the same level as the bottom if the bed of the Big Leather, while at the southern end it would have a drop of

about 4 feet to the bottom of the bed of the Goonal branch, and I have no doubt that this channel if made would increase greatly in size by scouring. The cost of such a channel should be about £330 per mile, if made by contract, and the estimate is based on the practical cost of work of this description done by stations in the district.

' 12. BENEFIT TO OTHER LANDS —Should the channel round the 'raft' and the one recommended above be made, great benefit would be derived by making the Mehi River practically permanent from Goonal westerly, and this would be a great advan-

tage to the settlers fronting the south bank of the Mehi, and to the travelling public, who would then be able to use the stock route along the north bank of that river, and this in addition to the advantage of draining the Watercourse.

'13. VOLUME OF WATER.- An attempt has been made to obtain from the Sydney Meteorological Department, and also from the post office officials at Bingara, Pallymallawa and Moree, records of the heights of the Gwydir River extending over a

number of years, but without success ; such records are not obtainable. A series of sectional levels have therefore been taken at various points of the channels. One taken below Boolooroo Bridge, about 5 miles north east of Moree, before any large take-off gives the volume of the Gwydir at 575,388,000 gallons, per hour when in fairly high flood Medgum Creek, with a small cutting 4 feet deep by 12 feet wide, relieves the Gwydir to the extent of 202,629,000 gallons per hour leaving 372,769,000 gallons per hour flowing towards the 'raft'. The new channel of the Big Leather will carry off 133,674,000 gallons per hour between its banks, equal to a rise of about 6 feet in the Gwydir River above ordinary summer level. The proposed cuttings would carry off about 14,147,000 gallons per hour when first made, and may be reasonably expected to scour out to the size of the new Big Leather channel before very long.

'14. MAINTENANCE OF CUTTINGS.-Any cuttings made in connection with the subject land, where the fall of country is small, where the banks are low, and the surface soil friable, would require a certain amount

of supervision during and after floods to keep them free from drift timbers, but I do not anticipate any special trouble as far as the proposed cuttings are concerned.

'15 DISPOSAL.-In my opinion the lands covered by this report are not suitable in their present condition for closer pastoral settlement, and unless the two channels advocated in this report are made, I think that the lands can only be leased in large areas for long terms at low rentals, but I do not consider that they come within the

scope of the 26th Section of the Crown Lands Act of 1895, as no amount of expenditure on the land leased to each holder will render that land suitable for settlement. Drainage— about the only condition that can be imposed beyond the ordinary ones of ringbarking and conservation of water— will not render the country safe ; it will not prevent flooding, though it will sweeten the land and to a great extent get rid of the fluke that breeds so freely in the stagnant swamp after a wet year or two. Parts of the subject lands are suitable for additional areas for holders not having a living area, but if leased in this way each holder would require at least 3000 acres of this country to be even moderately safe from floods and fires. Should the channels be made the cost should be partly defrayed by the owners of alienated lands benefiting by the channels; also the most westerly one could, if desired, be run wholly through Crown lands, held now under 18th section of lessees of Midkin and Goonal, and the increased rents that would be easily obtained from the Crown lands that could be made available, and which would increase in carrying capacity from a sheep to 4 acres to a sheep to 2 acres, should, on the face of it leave the cutting of the channels a profitable undertaking to the Crown. I am aware that applications for improvement leases of this country were lodged by lessees of Collymongle, Meroe, Burrendoon and Goonal holdings, but that was done before the passing of the 1903 Act and the granting of 18th section leases. I am not definitely aware that, any of these applicants, except the Collymongle lessees are now desirous of going on with those applications. Petitions have been lodged, asking for this land to be retained in the interest of settlers not having a living area, to increase their holdings, but as far as I know, the settlers effected are chiefly those to the north of the Gingham Watercourse, who would probably desire to increase on Midkin holding.

"I have, etc., "A. C. LOCKHART"

The Board, consisting of Messrs. Poate, Boydell and Thompson, sat, to hear the evidence concerning the Watercourse country, Mr. Thurburn, District Surveyor, repre

sented the Crown : Mr. J. T. Crane appeared for Mr. McLean, of Collymongle: and Mr. Zlotkowaki appeared on behalf of Mr. Bucknell : Mr. W. C. Moadie on behalf of Miss Lomax.

Mr. Lockhart, Staff Surveyor, gave evidence in support of his report until lunch. On resuming after lunch, Mr. P. C. Watt gave evidence as follows : I am part owner and lessee of Goonal station. I went to Goonal on 11th April, 1866 I only know of the raft from hearsay. When I went to Goonal the general run of the water was down past the Goonal Head Station. In floods some of the water got into the Big leather and some into the Watercourse country. In 1870 the water used to reach Goonal 10 days before it reached Wandoona. That state of things does not exist now. The water runs for months now down the Big leather channel before it gets to Goonal. I saw the watercourse country shortly after I settled at Goonal, in 1872. When I got the notice to attend here I did not know what evidence I would be required to give, so wrote out some memoirs.

By the Board: I am submitting some details from memory prior to 1883, and from 1883 from extracts from my books.

Mr. Watt then read his memoirs.

By District Surveyor. The Big leather had not cut back and junctioned with the Gwydir River at the time I spoke of when the water reached Big Leather 10 days before it reached Goonal. I know that a new channel has cut from the Big leather to the Gwydir during the last two years, that practically prevents the water from reaching Goonal. There is a well defined channel extending from Goonal to the Barwon. There is a T.S.R- along a great part of that country. Under the existing state of affairs there is very little water in the channel. It does not go quite dry but nearly so. The water spreads over the country in a high flood (that which goes past Wandoona) : there is no channel to carry it away. This water ruins the country ; there is too much of it. The proposal of Mr. Surveyor Lockhart is, in my opinion, feasible, and from my experience would carry off the excess water. It would not be prejudicial to the

interests of the settlers there to have the cuttings, but they would be benefited. It would also benefit the stock routes below Goonal. There is very little timber on the country these Cuttings would pass through. I have had considerable experience about excavating tanks as a station manager. The cost of the cuttings described should not be more than about fourpence per yard, as there would be no clearing required, for it is open clear country. If such a drain was dug the running water would scour it out. It would be very beneficial for the water in big floods to run over the land if it could be carried away again as it would act as irrigation. If Mr. Lockhart's scheme was carried out, after the water has been taken off and kept off for several years the country would be suitable for settlement areas. I have not seen this new channel. I would have no objection to the cutting being made through my land, and I speak for my partners. From Cudgedool down to within 1½ miles of Goonal boundary the channel has never been well defined, but from there down to the Barwon the channel is well defined.

By Mr. Crane : I don't think the cutting would carry all the water. The land to the west would be flooded occasionally until the cutting scoured out. The effect of this channel would be to do away with the Watercourse country very nearly except in a high flood. That is on the assumption that the channel scoured out. It would take a good many years to rest the country to bring it back to its, original state before it was inundated. Until such time as the channel took all the water, the country to the west, to a large extent, would be swampy. A channel cut through Cully mungle from the Barwon to the Watercourse country would drain a lot of water, but at the expense of probably silting up the lagoon.

Mr. John Pacey Inness said if such a channel was taken through Boonaldoon he would offer no objection, as it would not affect him injuriously. He had only been

on Boonaldoon 18 months.

My M. Zlolkowski: We take a favourable view of the cutting south of the 'raft.'

