



Friends Of Merbein Common

Submission to: **MDBA Productivity 5 year review of the Murray Basin Plan**

Mildura 28 June 2023

Submitted by **Friends of the Merbein Common**

Friends of the Merbein Common is a volunteer Community Group that works with Parks Vic & Mallee Catchment Management Authority to manage the Merbein Common, a significant area of Murray Flood Plain with 15 K of Murray River frontage, with significant Cultural Heritage sites, three Billabongs and miles of recreational Tracks abutting the Merbein Township, an area typical of the Murray Low Land Flood Plain.

Flood Mitigation

Flood Mitigation has the highest priority on all MDB communiqués, Stream flow Management needs to work more closely with the Environmental Water Managers to create more meaningful pulses within river flows to more closely mimic natural flows.

Environmental Flows

The greatest expectation of the MDB Plan was for the rejuvenation of the Murray Darling Flood Plains with Environmental Flows. This has been the greatest disappointment. The management of Environmental Allocations to benefit the environment has been too conservative, too timid and failed community expectations.

Constraints Program

We are concerned at the lack of progress being made on decreasing the impediments to River Flows through the Constraints Program. The problem has been identified and a plan has been implemented, but not aggressively enough. It is currently running way behind time. Farming on the flood plain below Hume Dam is holding the downstream environment to ransom and the priority of the Constraints Program must be elevated and better resourced, before the lowland flood plain and the Black Box communities are further permanently degraded.

The Merbein Common Flood Plain

The Merbein Common Flood Plain has been suffering from a lack of intermittent overbank flows under the current management regime, whereas, historically, say back in the 1960 and 1970, overbank flows were a regular occurrence.

The Low Land Flood Plain is changing in nature. There has not been a meaningful Black Box germination event in many, many years and many Black Box Communities have died during the droughts, as the rainfall was not enough to sustain the weaker Black Box on the marginal soils.

More recently, the tendency is for Salt Bush to become the dominant flood Plain species and as it is not a Flood Plain species, it has been drowned. The 2016 flood could have been far more beneficial had it been topped up with an Environmental Allocation to provide an Overbank Flow. This was a significant opportunity lost.

Northern Basin, Darling Catchment

The Darling River Catchment is a significant part of the Murray Darling Basin. The management of the Northern Basin under the watch of the MDBA has been disastrous for the Basin Environment, particularly the Lower Darling, which in turn has consequences for the Low Land Murray River flows and management.

Richard Wells
President

Doug Matthews
Secretary

Friends of the Merbein Common