

I feel honoured that my opinion counts. So, on that note

I will leave the discussions of the flood plain harvesting debacles to those more informed than me. Those that can put a stop to the legal yo yo of the situation.

I will leave the gluttony of water trading to those more knowledgeable than I. Those that understand the stock exchange.

The issue of water and land being sold separately seems way beyond my comprehension. Water as a commodity on the stock exchange is absurd to me.

I will leave the greed and thieving of water to those more legally qualified to deal with the compliancy issues involved and to fine those found guilty and return the water that is stolen. Money does not replace water.

I am relying on our ministers. they are the ones to sort out the mess in the matter of all the states sharing the responsibility for the health of the basin and how the northern basin needs to contribute the remaining 450 gig of water for the good of our nation. The southern basin has complied and we now need the northern basin to care.

How one navigates the dysfunctional attitudes of blaming state against state for our national water security distress is beyond me.

We feel good when a million fingerlings are released into our waterways. But the very act demonstrates the marine inequity that is becoming the norm.

The Coorong, barrages, the up water, inter valley transfers, The SDL's, the continuous gigababble that zooms over most of our head leaves me feeling a bit dumb.

I cruise the rivers and watch the river degradation and the slow demise of our inland waterways; frustrated that we as a nation cannot see what nature needs.

I do not feel educated enough to know how to make a difference on these issues.

But.....What I can share with you is the situation regarding navigation on our inland rivers and that is a long history.

I would like you to imagine, hundreds and hundreds of years ago when this very river was a highway. This river had canoes big and small travelling up and down her.

Prior to colonisation, this very stretch of river had hundreds of boats on her. Boats for fishing, boats for moving people, boats for trading goods. The business of boating on our rivers has a history of thousands of years.

The evidence is there if you look. Between here and Echuca there would be a thousand historical sites of canoe trees that stand camouflaged in the bush, all hand crafted by skilled traditional shipwrights of days gone by that are hardly mentioned or acknowledged.

The maritime history of Australian rivers before colonisation is often ignored and I find that a stifle on our story. Navigation has brought trade to inland communities in the past and still does to this very day.

Navigation seems barely considered when committees decree regulation and design infrastructure on inland waters.

Today we have jet skis, wake boats, ski boats, tinnies, houseboats, fishing boats, kayaks, SUP's, canoes, tour boats, paddle boats, paddle steamers, wooden boats, electric boats.

We have rafts and noodles, blown up tyres and oodles of contraptions that float us downstream. We have barges and ferries, barrels and punts, lilos and a million river dreams. Dreams that in reality all contribute tangibly to the survival and resilience of our river communities.

Boating in all its forms on our inland rivers.... How much is it worth?

Fishing.... How much is it worth?

Maritime tourism industry? How much is it worth?

Recreational boating? How much is this worth?

And how can they grow?

Our rivers are no longer wild. Our rivers in the basin are managed. All the waters in the basin are accounted for. So, let's manage them so that a baseload of water for rivers has real voice at the table. Let's manage our rivers so that they are connected to each other as nature intended.

Since colonisation, Commonwealth Navigational law date back to constitutional law, whereby the river is known as the kings hwy. Impediment to navigation surely remains illegal. we are continuously hindering free maritime movement on our rivers. So much so that there is little confidence in the business arena to develop trades and create employment.

A shining example of this law being flaunted is the Pooncarie weir. Somehow the little ol Wentworth Shire is in charge of the management of the weir on Australia's 2nd largest river, the Darling Baaka River at Pooncarie. The Wentworth Shire refuse to allow maritime vessels through the weir and will not move the buoys that they consider permanent, even in a high river where passage is safe and navigable. This is hindering navigational rights. Which in turn hinders economic growth.

Why are there boat ramps only above a weir? We need Boat ramps upstream and downstream of all weirs along our major waterways. We need Fish-ladders at all weirs.

Locks for navigation on all weirs on major rivers would be really sensible so that boats like mine can travel the inland waters.

My boat the Wanambe is 7 metres long and has a draft of 25 cm. If my boat cannot get down a river neither can a big ol' Murray cod or a mature Mumma turtle.

The basin has 367 species of birds that call our waterways home.

- 85 mammal species
- over 50 native fish
- 31 native frogs

- 46 snake species
- 100 lizard species
- 3 freshwater turtle species
- 124 families of macroinvertebrates.

- Plant life... you guess how many species there are.

There are over 30,000 wetlands in the Basin and these wetlands all need water. If as a society of people, we do not create a baseload of water for our environment and the critters that live here, then I am saddened for our future.

The Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder has not been given its full allocation of water. How can it do its job of supporting the rivers, creeks, wetlands, marshes and lagoons throughout the whole Murray Darling Basin if it does not have enough water.

2750 gigalitre of water is barely enough to keep the whole natural system within the basin damp. It is time to implement the plan as far as Environmental Water is concerned. No trying to save water through some efficiency works. The CEWH needs real water that can flow and move throughout the basin and keep the continents moisture levels even.

I am born in 1957. I have 7 grandchildren and I want each of them to be able to swim, sail, glide, drink, fish, paddle, kayak, toboggan, float or watch our inland waters flow.

I was christened in the bell of the Royal Navy flagship the Ark Royal; I have been on boats all my life in many parts of the world. I have built a 90 ton Paddlesteamer on this river, I have sailed the east coast of Australia and I have cruised on all manner of vessels up and down the rivers of the basin. What I observe is

Desertification will be the outcome if water is not added. The right to a healthy environment is a human right.

Baseline for rivers

There are now over 95 threatened species in the Basin, including 35 birds and 16 mammals.