

Letter to the Editor
The Weekly Times – Victorian rural newspaper

The provocative headline 'River War' (The Weekly Times June 25th) does nothing to help save the nation's greatest river.

It will inflame Victorian readers who are led to believe that SA is to blame for the impending death of the Lower Lakes and Coorong.

As the realities of drought and low flows creep upstream, people are searching for someone else to blame.

Peter Hunt, claims SA's inaction is the cause of our problems. Wrong. Over-extraction is and we don't control inflows upstream.

- Evaporation from the Lower Lakes is the reason for the water's soaring salinity. Wrong. Low flows are.
- The barrages turned the lakes into artificial ponds. Wrong. Insufficient flows forced the building of the barrages to maintain the lakes' fresh water condition.
- Allow 'the sea to slowly flow back into the lakes'. Wrong. The sea was never in the lakes, apart from relatively miniscule moments in time over the 7,500 years the lakes have existed in their current form.
- Build a weir at Wellington. This demand is naïve and dangerous. Blocking the bottom end of the river will not fix the problem – correcting the cause will.

The Murray has withstood many droughts over thousands of years but the Lower Lakes have never been in this situation before. The only thing that has changed is the excessive extraction of normal flows. Evidence shows the river has been plundered for the past 100+ years.

Yes, we can build a weir – and soon after two things will happen.

1. Greed will see even more water drained from the river.
2. The river will progressively die back upstream as salts and toxins normally diluted and flushed to sea by flows accumulate back along the river. (1,000 tonnes of salt per day pass Wellington normally.)

First and foremost, we need a healthy river system. The river states must work together on this or there'll be nothing left for anyone.

Arguing amongst ourselves is what got us into this mess.
Understanding the whole system is a prerequisite to finding a solution.

The common enemy is over-allocation, fuelled by greed and ignorance. None of us can fight this alone.

Signed - Adrian Pederick MP JP

Monday June 30, 2008