
From: Coulton, Matthew <Matthew.Coulton@agriculture.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 15 July 2016 9:30 AM
To: Phillip Glyde
Cc: Fisher, Tim; Slatyer, Tony; Parker, David
Subject: FW: NBR technical documents [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]
Attachments: Waterbirds Final Report UNSW.PDF

Hi Phillip,

[s.22]



Matt

From: Tom Chesson [mailto:Tom.Chesson@irrigators.org.au]
Sent: Thursday, 14 July 2016 7:39 PM
To: Coulton, Matthew; Monica Morona; Hyett, Richard
Cc: [s.47F]
Subject: FW: NBR technical documents [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Good Afternoon

Attached is the MDBA's; 'A review of the relationships between flow and waterbird ecology in the Condamine-Balonne and Barwon-Darling River Systems' and perhaps you can help me get it right ... the only new research in this bird work is the upgrading of some models with newer models which included an extra twelve months of records?

The report states;

The project was structured into three parts:

- *A literature review and preparation of a discussion paper.*
- *Expert panel workshop to discuss assumptions and discussion paper.*
- *Final report incorporating literature review and expert opinions.*

The review process was undertaken in three stages:

- 1) *Draft discussion paper (21st August 2015) with an initial review of data and literature distributed and discussed at an expert opinion workshop.*
- 2) *Expert opinion workshop held on the 28th August 2015 at UNSW brought together practitioners, managers and scientists to discuss the assumptions and the management of environmental flows for waterbirds (Appendix A).*
- 3) *A final report (this document) that collated the findings and recommendations of the expert workshop and the original data presented in the discussion paper.*

I'm shocked and can only say that this type of work is an appalling indictment on the MDBA if it represents its effort over the last four years. A literature review and a group of 'experts' standing around a white board for a few hours

at UNSW is not new knowledge, especially when it was based on their own work. Why were there not any industry 'experts' involved in the one day workshop either as participants or witnesses? Where is the new research filling in the knowledge gaps that necessitated the need for the Northern Basin review in the first place? If this is the quality of 'new' knowledge then it is shaping up as a waste of everyone's time and money. It does highlight my personal concerns that much of the work underpinning the Basin Plan is guestimates masquerading as science.

It is disappointing that the very survival and future prosperity of irrigation dependent communities, key environmental outcomes and the expenditure of billions of dollars of taxpayer's dollars are riding on at what is best a pretty crude guestimate, which has no meaningful error band as it is based on assumptions built on assumptions built on assumptions. We are constantly told that the Plan is informed by the best available science and is fit for purpose. Yet, after having four years to undertake 'new' research out in the paddock we are still relying on literature reviews and 'experts' doodling on white boards. There would also seem to be a rather large conflict of interest have the 'experts' try and guess the accuracy of what was their own work!

I have no doubt the slides that the MDBA will show on the their upcoming community 'consultation' tour of the northern Basin will claim the work has been reviewed and is fit for purpose, without fully informing communities about the limitations of the work that has been undertaken.

If this is the best that the MDBA can come up with and has failed to incorporate a majority of 'new' real paddock data, which has been ground-truthed and not just some desktop literature review written by the same people who in turn formed an in house expert panel to sit around a white board and guess as to the accuracy of their own previous work, then it is time MDBA staff involved with the Northern Basin Review were moved out of Canberra and relocated to Walgett and Dirranbandi in order to 'hard-wire' some localism, and actual 'new' data into the Northern Basin Review. There is no reason that the Northern Basin MDBA staff should not be permanently based in communities in the Northern Basin, especially if there is still a lengthy process to go through when changes are made to the Basin Plan as a result of the northern Basin Review.

It would be greatly appreciated if you could let me know if there is a video or voice recording or at the very least the minutes of these all of the 'expert' workshops, particularly the one held at the UNSW on the 28th August 2015, are going to be made publicly available to NIC's Northern Basin Members before the next round of MDBA consultation takes place which are due to begin next week.

As already stated it is simply not good enough after four years that this is the standard of work that is being dressed up as 'new' research as part of the Northern Basin Review. What hope communities who are facing job losses in the order of 45% have not just wasted four years of their life on an outcome the MDBA has already predetermined.

Yours sincerely,

Tom Chesson

CEO - National Irrigators' Council

P: (02) 6273 3637

M: 0418 415 597

www.irrigators.org.au

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