



Murray Darling Basin Royal Commission
GPO Box 1445
Adelaide, SA 5001.

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Upper Murrumbidgee Demonstration Reach (UMDR) is a partnership initiative that seeks to work collaboratively with all catchment stakeholders in the upper Murrumbidgee River catchment to protect and enhance its associated aquatic communities and the ecosystems on which these depend. Native fish are a specific focus of our initiative. The initiative was established in 2010 under the then Native Fish Strategy in recognition of the fact that the upper Murrumbidgee catchment has small yet resilient populations of native fish including nationally significant populations of Murray cod and Macquarie perch, as identified by the national recovery plans for these species.

The UMDR notes that the Murray Darling Basin Authority's (MDBA's) environmental watering priorities include those that support native fish, water birds, native vegetation and river flows and connectivity. We also understand that these priorities guide the planning and use of environmental watering across the Basin to ensure the most effective use of water available for the Basin environment. These priorities are also important for the upper Murrumbidgee River upstream of Burrinjuck Dam, which is currently classified, for the purposes of guiding and planning environmental watering, as 'unregulated' despite the fact that its flows are impacted by Tantangara Dam, which dams the headwaters of the river.

Tantangara Dam is owned and operated by Snowy Hydro Ltd and releases from the dam are governed by the requirements under Snowy Hydro's operating licence to provide flows for montane rivers associated with the Snowy Hydro Scheme. This may be part of the reason for classifying this reach as unregulated and this has meant that the upper Murrumbidgee River is excluded from guidance and planning it could receive when it comes to consideration of environmental flows in the light of the Murray Darling Basin Authority's identified priorities. We consider this to be an unsatisfactory anomaly which is currently not supporting the best utilisation of flows for connectivity and native fish. This is at odds with the MDBA's declared objectives to make the most effective use of water available for the Basin environment and at best is considered by our community as a ridiculous planning oversight.

We believe that even with the flows which are available to the system under current arrangements, better guidance and planning in regard to environmental watering in line with the MDBA's environmental watering priorities assist flows in the upper Murrumbidgee to be much better utilised, especially to enable conditions to support the persistence of Macquarie perch

upstream of Cooma, which is one of two natural populations of his species remaining in the wild in NSW. We therefore ask the Royal Commission to identify the upper Murrumbidgee River, upstream of Burrinjuck Dam, as a system that is indeed impacted by regulation of flow and recommend that this reach be included in processes and mechanisms to support better planning and guidance of environmental watering priorities into the future, such as (but not limited to) the long term watering plans being developed at the current time by the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage to support flow management in the Southern Connected Basin.

Please do not hesitate to contact me on _____ you
require further information.

Yours faithfully,

Antia Brademann
UMDR Facilitator

30 April 2018