

Independent Social and Economic Panel

Rice Growers Association Annual Conference
2 August 2019

Bruce Simpson – Panel Member



INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL
AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN THE BASIN

The Hon. David Littleproud, has convened an Independent Panel to undertake an assessment of social and economic conditions in the Basin.

The Panel's assessment will be used to support longer term efforts to monitor and understand social and economic conditions in the Basin, the impacts of water reforms on Basin communities, as well as inform future policy making to ensure a vibrant future for Basin communities.

Interim Assessment: early December 2019

Final Assessment report: 30 April 2020

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Panel Members

- Robbie Sefton (chair)
- Rene Woods
- David McKenzie
- Andrew Kassebaum
- Bruce Simpson
- Deborah Peterson
- Michelle Ramsay



The Panel is motivated by a shared desire to see Basin communities flourish, now and into the future.



What the review will do (and won't)

The review will:

- Assess the impact of the Basin Plan on the vulnerability, resilience and adaptive capacity of Basin communities and their potential for development and growth.
- Explore a range of options for stimulating, fostering and promoting healthy and sustainable rural and regional communities in the Basin, having particular regard to the impact of the loss of productive water resources.

The review and the Panel will not:

- Be reviewing the Basin Plan



Stronger voice for communities

- The Panel will enable Murray-Darling Basin communities to have a stronger voice in the discussion of Basin reform issues and bring the social and economic experience of those Basin communities into clear view.
- Engagement with people whose livelihoods and lives are most connected to and impacted by water. This includes irrigators, recreational and commercial river users, businesses who operate in local economies deeply connected to the rivers and groups of people who have clear local, cultural and other connections the Basin's rivers and water management.



Three stage process

1. Initiation (to August 2019) – Seeking feedback from communities on the Panel’s task and approach, as well as the commissioning of independent analysis to inform the assessment.

The outcome: Publication of the Panel’s final Terms of Reference reflecting community feedback.

2. Stocktake (to December 2019) – Extensive engagement with Basin communities, leaders, industry stakeholders and experts to gather the evidence base required to address the key questions.

The outcome: The Panel’s Interim Assessment delivered to Government

3. Options and Strategies (to April 2020) – Engage widely on the findings of the Interim Assessment, their implications, and potential options available to governments, communities and other stakeholders to promote prosperous, resilient and sustainable Basin communities.

The outcome: The Panel’s Final Assessment and advice to Government.



Draft Terms of Reference

- A. The review will provide an independent assessment of social and economic conditions in rural and regional communities across the Basin.
- B. The review will also assess the impact of the water reforms including the Basin Plan on the vulnerability, resilience and adaptive capacity of Basin communities and their development potential.
- C. The review will support longer-term efforts to monitor and understand the social and economic conditions in the Basin, and the impacts and opportunities of water reforms on Basin communities, and will be used by governments and leaders to help evaluate the outcomes of the water reforms including the Basin Plan. This is not a review of the Basin Plan.
- D. The review should take into account the ongoing structural changes in agriculture and communities in the Murray-Darling Basin, and seek to separate the effects of these trends, and events such as drought, from the effects of the water reforms including the Basin Plan.
- E. The work of the Panel should also explore a range of options that stimulate, foster and promote healthy and sustainable rural and regional communities in the Basin.



Key questions for Panel to consider

1. What are the visions and hopes of Basin people for themselves and their communities?
2. What have been the social and economic experiences of Basin communities, relative to other rural and regional communities in Australia, and what have been the main underlying drivers of these experiences?
3. What are expected to be the most significant drivers of future change, opportunities, and risks for different Basin communities?
4. How have water reforms and changes impacted different Basin communities to date, and what future impacts and opportunities are likely?
5. If irrigation ceased to be viable in some regions, what would that mean for communities in those regions and what could be done to manage the impacts of the possible changes.
6. What strategies have the greatest potential to enhance the resilience, adaptability and wellbeing of different Basin communities?
7. What are the responsibilities and distinctive contributions of governments, businesses, non-profit groups, and individuals in enabling action to promote prosperous and sustainable Basin communities?



Going deeper on impacts & opportunities

The following illustrative supplementary questions are also being considered:

- To what extent can the changing dynamics of irrigated agriculture be attributed to different aspects of water reform (including water trade), and how might associated changes in water prices and use impact on the risks, opportunities and wellbeing of Basin communities?
- What have been the effects of water recovery, state water allocation policies and regulations, water sharing and river management (including operational rules) on Basin communities?
- How have environmental water recovery efforts, including buybacks and government investments in on-farm and off-farm irrigation infrastructure, affected irrigators and Basin communities?
- How significant have these effects been relative to other drivers, including climate variability, drought, commodity prices and exchange rates?
- What are the main past and likely future social and economic outcomes for Basin communities from the management and use of held environmental water?
- What potential improvements to government programs and policies could assist Basin communities to adapt to change?
- Are there any impediments to change that should be addressed?



Questions for Basin communities

- What changes are you seeing in your communities? What concerns you and what would you like to know?
- What changes in your community do you believe are related to water reform?
- How have water rules and trading patterns impacted on your community's economy and social fabric?
- What have been the positive and negative effects of more environmental water being available in the system for your community?
- What opportunities and challenges do you expect in the future?
- What does a good future for your community look like from your perspective?
- What can communities do to improve their future, and what do they need to do this? What could governments do to assist communities?



Values and Principles

The Panel will build on its shared commitment to the following values and principles:

- Acting with integrity and authenticity to earn peoples' trust
- Respecting the intrinsic dignity and fundamental equality of all people
- Being inclusive to ensure that people and their communities aren't overlooked or ignored by the process
- Listening with the intent to understand
- Respect diversity of views
- Engaging in honest, balanced and clear communication
- Demonstrating courage and boldness in seeking to make things better

The Panel asks that all stakeholders and contributors to the independent assessment respect and act in accordance with high ethical standards as a foundation for shared progress.



How you can participate

www.basin-socio-economic.com.au

- Provide feedback on the Terms of Reference and Framework by mid August via **website or email**
- Subscribe to **email list** via the website for alerts about events or publications or other ways of being informed and involved
- Participate in one of our **community meetings** in September (locations and dates on our website shortly)
- Involve others in conversations about what matters in your community and **encourage others to contribute** to the Panel's activities.



Make a submission

Please provide your input by 16 August 2019:

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Contact us

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