

11/2/11

Dams for both flood mitigation AND Murray-Darling Scheme.

Dear Justice Holmes,

The Traveston Dam idea was scrapped because certain politicians, hungry for votes, allowed a few farmers to preserve their land. If that dam had been built, the flooding would have only been a little less severe, but it would have helped. Is it not obvious that Australia as a whole, and particularly Queensland: needs a politics-free water plan?

Floods of recent times have demonstrated that neither of two sources of flooding was controllable: heavy rainfall, and too much flow from tributaries into rivers.

Since no one can do anything about volume and frequency of rain; then much study and action must be done to regulate flows of water in tributaries and rivers.

As a pensioner and part time welfare person I cannot access maps of where dams and pipelines are; but the speed of the flooding seems to indicate a great lack. Yet there must be plenty of experts who can access these maps; also maps of 'normal' dry areas; topography; 'normal' rainfall etc.

These same experts could very soon procure a map of Queensland showing all rivers and tributaries. They could then mark on that map which tributaries need to be dammed first; which ones second; and so on. Also which pipelines take excess water from where to where.

When you have the 'big picture' you have to draw it or else it will be lost! The 'big picture' is also needed for accurate plotting of priorities.

Because of the huge cost plus enormous time frame to build just one dam on one river: I suggest smaller dams on tributaries to be built first, (not instead); supplemented by pipelines to existing dams and/or other slower tributaries. Another reason is that after a river is dammed, tributaries fill it much quicker!

Yet because floods can also occur upstream from dams then levels must be carefully watched; and regulated by opening sluice gates.

A pattern of dammed tributaries and pipelines could eventually reach the Darling river. This could keep the Darling flowing well in dry seasons; yet by the turning off of many valves and sluice gates: prevent it from flowing too fast. Thus a predictable flow of the Darling into the Murray makes the Murray-Darling Scheme re-workable. (Also helping the saline problem of South Australia.)

I have already written to other authorities about the zoning of irrigation so I won't pursue that matter in this letter.

Smaller dams first on tributaries; with sluice gates and trained operators: could also stop them from over-filling the rivers that have recently done the most damage. (And in dry times supply water to adjacent farms.) Also some damming of tributaries together with pipelines could be designed to by-pass certain rivers until such time that these rivers could also be dammed. Also as tributaries are gradually dammed it will be easier to gauge which rivers are most urgent to dam.

The old saying: "Save money for a rainy day" has never been truer. The money saved from wherever must go into mitigation. Then when the 'rainy day' comes, followed by 30 more, we will be ready!

Yours sincerely, Arthur Johnson.

P.S. In 1957 I toured the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme. This is a compact example of what can, and what must be done over a large area of Queensland (with or without hydro-electricity).