

MD Basin graziers: 'go ahead and flood our land'

Livestock farmers in the Murray-Darling Basin have pledged to allow the Murray-Darling Basin Authority to flood more than a million acres (400 000 hectares) of their land.



Credit: scienceimage

The graziers want the Australian Government to deliver more environmental flow than the 2750 billion litres proposed under the controversial Murray-Darling Basin draft plan. They hope the 'voluntary flood easements' will help the Authority increase environmental flows by indemnifying it from legal action for damage to private property.

'We want our properties to flood more naturally. Natural flooding restores life into our land and rivers,' says Mark Etheridge, a sheep grazer and President of the Australian Floodplain Association, which represents the farmers.

The Association is working with environmental lobby group Friends of the Earth ([FOE](#)). 'This case busts open the myth that there's only one kind of farmer out there,' says FOE's Jonathan La Nauze.

'Sixty-nine per cent of farmers in the Basin are not irrigators and they account for almost two-thirds of its agricultural output. Many of them are only too willing to facilitate an increase in environmental flows, because it is in their interest and the interest of Basin communities.'

Howard Jones, Chair of Murray-Darling Wetlands Inc. – a non-profit organisation dedicated to improving the health of wetlands and river catchments in the Basin – comments, 'Farmers who have watched areas decline in health and production over many years want to be part of the solution.'

'For the past ten years many have worked hard to try and protect their floodplains and wetlands, and ensure that when the floods came they could breathe life back into our community.'

'We all need to work together to get good outcomes for our rivers and wetlands, and overcome apparent constraints

proactively and sensibly.’

Law firm Baker & McKenzie is working pro bono on the legal documents necessary to give effect to the pledge.

Source: Australian Floodplain Association and Friends of the Earth

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