

## **“Practical Solution of Water for the Murray Darling Basin”**

We are very grateful to John Kell who joined us at one week's notice when the meeting had to convert to zoom.

He summarised his personal engineering work arising from thinking deeply about the plight of the Murray Darling Basin during drought and its long term prospects.

Initially he looked at the problem, drawing on the presentation John Keniry gave to us a year ago; notably that the rivers, species, ecosystems, communities and downstream farmlands, particularly downstream of major irrigators on the Darling and tributaries, have been short changed in their water needs.

Among various solutions proposed to address this, John Kell sees the addition of water into the Basin as fundamental, to the benefit of all stakeholders.

He has calculated that up to 3,500 GL/year can be made available by building a dam at Mt Foxton to store 9,000 GL in the upper Burdekin in Central Queensland, then delivering it to the Darling catchment by a 18 m wide x 5 m deep channel, by gravity at an optimal velocity of 6 kph for 450 km to the saddle of Lake Galilee.

The dam built at Mt Foxton would expand the footprint of the planned Hells Gate dam, which is smaller and undergoing detailed feasibility studies partly funded by the Federal Government. Mt Foxton provides advantages of much lower evaporation, higher storage capacity, and 2,400 GL/year water inflow, plus an altitude that permits gravity flow to the Darling without pumping.

The water inflow amount can be supplemented by a diversion through a 25 km tunnel from the Herbert River, which is further north, thereby delivering a total of up to 3,500 GL/year when conditions require that much, especially supplementing downstream requirements and enabling the Darling River to flow even in drought conditions.

While the engineering solution seems readily achievable and economical, the political spectrum, with 4 governments, numerous government departments, farmers, indigenous communities, towns, vested interests, etc is complex and an immense challenge.

The immensity of these challenges was referred to in the Q&A and in the vote of thanks by Max Moore-Wilton, along with our deep appreciation and encouragement to achieve success.

John is now seeking political support for the project. He would greatly welcome any ideas that may help bring the project to fruition, thereby delivering so much benefit for Murray Darling Basin and for the nation.

John's presentation is available for members on the Sydney Probus website, and messages to him will be forwarded by contacting Peter James