



**Dr Anne Jensen**  
**Environmental Consultant**

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Hon Malcolm Turnbull  
Prime Minister of Australia  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

2 April 2017

Dear Prime Minister,

**RE: CRUCIAL OPPORTUNITY TO SEPARATE WATER AND AGRICULTURE PORTFOLIOS**

I understand that you are considering a Cabinet re-shuffle in the near future. This creates a crucial opportunity to separate the water and agriculture portfolios, to remove the conflict of interest created by having both portfolios reporting to the same Minister. Prime Minister Howard deliberately separated these two areas of responsibility when he started the process leading to introduction of the Water Act 2007 and the development of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

The Basin Plan is entering the critical final phase of implementation, and difficult and challenging decisions need to be taken to ensure the return of essential environmental flows to maintain the health of the river system for all dependent communities, both upstream and downstream. Upstream irrigators are actively resisting necessary reductions in water allocations. Separating the two portfolios right now would be a very strategic political step.

On 28 August 2016, I wrote to you to seek your active support to achieve full implementation of the Murray-Basin Plan, and raising concerns about New South Wales irrigators who intercepted environmental water in the Darling River system, thus gaining an economic windfall from diverting taxpayer-funded environmental water intended to relieve drought conditions in the Lower Darling.

Instead of answering my letter addressed to you as Prime Minister, you referred it to Barnaby Joyce to answer as Water Minister. His dismissive reply on 11 October was sent on Department of Agriculture letterhead and made it clear that his first priority was irrigation interests, with environmental issues very much of lesser concern.

The effective implementation of the Murray Darling Basin Plan is under serious threat and needs the attention of the Prime Minister again. You stood with John Howard when he set out to save the Murray-Darling Basin, and this Plan was the outcome of your joint efforts. It's time you finished what you started, personally.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Anne Jensen  
Environmental Consultant