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Member of the Lower River Murray Drought Reference Group – whilst in operation – during the drought,
Vice President Friends of the River, “Murray Watch”

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Whilst I was born in Adelaide at an early age (I can’t remember moving) I moved to Murray Bridge (now the Rural City of Murray Bridge) spending my early years and beginning my education at Murray Bridge prior to shifting to Adelaide to finish my education.

To be honest I hated school and would rather have been near the River Murray. My holidays were spent at either Murray Bridge or Wellington, where my passion for the river began as I explored the riverbanks or fished and just had fun but those early memories are still vivid.

During the flood of 1956 I spent much time watching as the river rose, to now, what seems an unbelievable level before the water receded and the clean up began.

I watched the river change and after moving around I joined the Royal Australian Army in 1965 and during that time spent most of my time in other States and Vietnam before my discharge in 1968. Upon my return to South Australia, Murray Bridge and the river I noticed how much the river had changed, it was no longer the pristine river of my youth, and it saddened/disappointed me to see how the condition and flow of the Murray had been altered.

After many things happening in my life in the late 60’s, 70’s and 80’s (marriages/divorces/different jobs) I decided that I wished to spend my later years near my river (one of my Email addresses was myriver@exemail.com.au) and as Murray Bridge had become too big I purchased a home in Mannum. That relocation saw me once again involved with my river. Whilst I moved to be near the river, mainly recreational pursuits were on my mind. I saw what had become of our State’s tourist Icon and the legacy we would be leaving for the next generations so I decided where and when possible I would become involved in restoration of our life line.

Prior to that move to Mannum, I had been heavily involved with many sporting, ex-service and community based organisations at Local, State and National levels. I served as the Assistant Secretary/Treasurer of the Kensington Park Returned Services League Sub-branch.

I became the first South Australian State Secretary of the Korea & South East Asia Forces Association of Australia later becoming the State President and the National Secretary and was South Australia’s first Life Member. I also served as the Treasurer of the Mannum RSL Sub-branch for ten years. Whilst serving as the National Secretary of the Korea & South East Asia Forces Association of Australia I was a member of the, “Australian National Korea War Memorial Consultative Committee” under the direction of the Department of Veterans’ Affairs. This committee oversaw all facets of building, dedication and un-veiling of the Korea War Memorial situated on ANZAC Parade in Canberra.

Since an early age I was involved with baseball in South Australia as a player, coach, scorer, selector, umpire as well as at a number of other official levels including SA Baseball League Board. I began playing baseball at Glen Osmond Primary School where I began my time as a coach at various levels for both Kensington and Northern Districts Baseball Clubs.

At Kensington Baseball Club I was involved as firstly a player, then a playing coach, member of the selection panel and on other various committees. When I moved away from the Kensington area I joined Northern Districts Baseball Club where I played, coached, was Chairman of selectors, “A” Grade Scorer, Secretary and the Club’s South Australia Baseball League delegate.

In 1982 I was a member of the committee, which was formed to facilitate the Australian Baseball Championships (Claxton Shield) which were held at Norwood oval. For a number of years I organised the tours interstate for the Championships in different States.

When I moved to Mannum I became involved with the Mannum Baseball Club firstly as a player and then the coach which took my involvement with baseball to close on fifty years and now still travel to Adelaide to watch Kensington “A” & “B” games each weekend.

During my time spent living in Adelaide I was an official at the Norwood Football Club (firstly assisting the Mini-League and later as a Ball-Steward) for nearly a decade and when I moved to Mannum I became involved with the Mannum Football Club as firstly a member of the committee then serving as the Vice-President and then Secretary.

In 1988 when I became a permanent resident in Mannum I became associated with the Department of Veterans' Affairs as a Welfare/Pensions Officer, Counsellor and a Peer Educator. In 1997 I was approached and asked if I would be prepared to organise an annual fishing competition in Mannum. I approached the then publican of the Mannum Hotel (our first sponsor) borrowed \$50 so began the, "Mannum Big River Fishing Competition" our first event was held in February 1998.

Since 1998 we had a total of 4058 entrants, presented some \$100K in prizes, and donated \$30K to local organisations including \$3581.45 to the Tsunami Appeal and then the Eastern States bushfire appeal.

The MBRFC was environmentally friendly as our Saturday Competition targeted European Carp only and over those ten years (I am only going to organise two competitions) has removed in excess of ten tonnes of the feral fish. The MBRFC was put into recession because of the low river levels making boat ramps dangerous and boating unsafe in some areas. Whilst it would be great to see the completion re-instated the previous committee have been unable to find a group. The Mannum Big River Fishing Competition is now an Incorporated body under the ownership/management of two Directors.

I have been a member of Mannum Progress/Promotions for many years and spent time on the executive prior to being elected as the Chairman and being in that position during the, "Source to Sea" which was part of Australia's Centenary Federation celebrations and through this involvement and my involvement with the Department of Veterans' Affairs I was awarded a "Centenary of Federation Medal".

I have had a long association and commitment to the Aged and in 1995 I was elected to the Board as the Chairman of Mid Murray Homes for the Aged Inc (formally Mannum Homes for the Aged). I held that position for eleven years (I resigned in 2006) and when I was elected as Chairman the facility consisted of a ten-bed hostel with twelve independent living units. During my time as Chairman we were successful in applying for grant funding and extended our hostel enabling us to increase to a thirty-bed hostel, an aging in place facility. Also during that time we were successful in gaining funding and built twelve more independent living units. Another extension has been two houses in Mannum and one in Murray Bridge under our control for aged and the disadvantaged and recently (2006) had built two units at Blanchetown as part of the vision to have accommodation throughout the Mid Murray Council area. Mid Murray Homes for the Aged was also successful in seeking funding from the Australian College of Surgeons to build two units to be used by registrars receiving practical education at the Mannum Medical Centre.

It was an exciting decade for Mid Murray Homes as our overall value was increased for under \$1M to over \$5M. I was elected to Mid Murray Council in 2000 and failed to be re-elected in 2006 (un-elected for telling the truth and working hard) though my time in Council was very rewarding. I was one of Council's representatives on the Murray Darling Association and when after returning from the Salinity Conference was successful in urging the Council into salinity mapping of our complete Council area with the assistance of the MDA.

As an Elected Member of the Mid Murray Council I represented Council on various Boards/Committees. As a member of the Murray & Mallee Local Government Association I was successful in instigating the LGA to formulate a LGA River Policy in conjunction with the Murray Darling Association.

As well as the MDA (I was the Secretary of Region 6) I was a member of the Board of the Murray Mallee Financial Counseling Service, the Committee of Murray Watch, the Regional Transport Advisory Committee, was invited to be a member of the Lower Murray Working Group holding the Water re-use Portfolio (I was the Secretary of the LMWG and I am still a member of the LMWG). I remain the Immediate Past South Australian Murray Darling Association Vice President and was the Ex-Secretary of the Region 6, but in 2013 I was re-elected as MDA Region 6 Secretary of the MDA.

The LMWG is a group set up by Council representatives of Region 6 and selected members of the MDA, "To provide a forum for open discussion on issues raised by members of participating Council's and MDA to offer an opportunity for open discussion as a think tank of Region 6".

Through my various associations within the ex-service community, the Homes for the Aged, the Murray Darling Association, and the local community I was awarded an OAM, for "Service to Veterans and their families through the Korea & South East Asia Forces Association of Australia, the Returned Service League, the Murray Darling Association and the Local Community".

I also represented the Local Government Association of South Australia on the, "Supported Residential Facilities Advisory Committee" a Ministerial appointment and was also selected to be a member of the, "Ministers Strategic Housing Advisory Committee" another Ministerial appointment.

I also was a member on the, "Integrated Natural Resource Management Group for the South Australian Murray Darling Association Incorporated Re-vegetation Committee" which is now part of the NRM.

I am a financial member of the Australian Water Association attending as many as possible of their meetings/forums/events associated with the River, Salinity and re-use of water.

Because of and through my commitments I was selected to be a member of the Commonwealth Relay Baton team during its journey from England to Australia.

Whilst still an elected member of Mid Murray Council I began putting together what I call 'Snippets Plus' and is put together by cutting and pasting articles from printed media, radio and television sourced from the Internet (time permitting), from within Australia and overseas (time required per day is about 3-4 hours per day).

Information from weekly [Australian Water Association](#) news, daily [Farm On Line](#) and press releases obtained from various sources Federal and State Government Ministers, Federal and State Government Departments, Members of both Federal and State Opposition's, any other reliable sources, blogs, also included is information gleaned from other sources focusing drought especially within the Murray-Darling Basin and South Australia's Lakes Alexandrina and Albert and Coorong, 'climate change' and sometimes a little history and humour. 'Snippets Plus' can be accessed from this web site www.psmithersmyriver.com and if you would like to be on the email list please let me know.

Please take the time to visit my web site and read my story, and if you wish to contact me my contact details are available on the site.

When it became obvious that a crisis associated with water and its continued supply was nearing I at all meetings attended by the Minister for the River Murray (at that stage it was John Hill MP) sought to have water restrictions activated. I also urged the Mid Murray Council to pass a motion that we urge the Minister to activate restrictions but was unable to have a motion carried.

I was extremely disappointed at my Council's attitude but as soon as John Hill returned from a meeting of Murray Darling Basin River Ministers and introduced water restrictions the Mayor was quoted in the Murray Valley Standard as saying, "I had to urge the Council to contact the Minister seeking water restrictions".

The River Murray has been for many years and is still one of my passions and I believe the problems within the Murray Darling Basin and its Rivers (from the headwaters of the Darling to the River Murray's mouth) are solvable (but doubt that pool level will be permanently restored below Lock 1 at Blanchetown unless a Lock is constructed in the Lower River Murray) but only with a unified effort from all State Governments and the Federal Government (though I am concerned about the emerging effects of 'Climate Change').

I am passionate about the necessity to re-use water, as is the case in many parts of the World, and I believe if all black water was recycled and returned to our watercourses and catchments within the Murray Darling Basin many problems associated with flow and the environment could be lessened. There is much to be done but a successful outcome is only possible with continued unified support for what has become a river under extreme pressure and one of the most controlled rivers in the World (which has now been included on the tenth most degraded waterways in the World) stress as is the rest of the Basin.

In 2006 I applied to be a member of Al Gore's and the Australian Conservation Foundations Climate Change Presenters course in Sydney and even though there were over 1700 entrants I was lucky enough to be one of the eighty-five selected. I thank the Mid-Murray Council for enabling me to attend the Al Gore presenter's course. I have begun delivering 'Climate Change' presentations and I have travelled within the Murray Darling Basin area in South Australia and other various places (some 4,800 K's) presenting on 'Climate Change.'

In 2009 I applied successfully to be a participant in the Asia Pacific 'Climate Change' Forum (some 400 people representing 19 Countries) and it was a great opportunity to network and re activate my involvement.

For about three years I have been a member of the, 'Lower River Murray Drought Reference Committee' representing the Murray Darling Association, Murray Watch, my area, and various sections of the local community and was a member of the, 'River Bank Slumping – Stake Holder Group' and still visit and record, usually with photos, and movement of soil or trees etc.

I recently assumed the position as the Independent Spokesperson for, “**Managing the Murray Darling Basin from Lock Zero**” and we are exerting as much pressure as possible to have an Environmental Impact Statement – scientifically – into the construction of a permanent Lock in the Lower River Murray below all off takes to ensure the State’s water supply and a pool level sufficiently high enough to make certain all irrigation pumps, ferries, boat ramps downstream of Lock 1 at Blanchetown are operating correctly. All information and supporting evidence can be accessed on my web site.

Thank you,
Peter R. Smith OAM

“Use Water Wisely — Help save the River Murray & the Murray Darling Basin”

“Ensuring the path we walk only leaves Footprints not Scars” E. Rowe