

Water for the Future

When it comes to water, Nature has not been kind to Australia. Or is it that she has laid down a giant challenge for us?

Maps showing average annual rainfall clearly indicate that the perimeter, and the Northern perimeter in particular, gets most of it. Tully on the north Qld coast is listed with an average of 3200mm – the highest in Australia though others are not far behind.

Eight decades ago an eminent engineer and visionary by the name of Dr John Job Crew Bradfield proposed a scheme to store and divert some of the excess water from the Burdekin/ Herbert Rivers inland.

It may well have been that he took his inspiration from the United States who had developed the Arizona Desert by storing and diverting the melting snow of the Rocky Mountains. Their scheme saw the construction of concrete lined canals that run for hundreds of kilometres through the desert. Whole cities, Phoenix and Tucson being prime examples, have grown and developed and are totally reliant upon this developed water.

Australia has had two major schemes, The Snowy and the Ord both of which have made major contributions to the development of Australian agriculture.

In addition they have contributed to the environmental development by the creation of wetlands. Whilst this may have been an unintended consequence it nonetheless has aided nature.

One example of this was reported in The Land 28th October 2010, by Dr Jennifer Marohasy in which she reports Scientists at the Institute of Applied Ecology, University of Canberra, have studied and report that for every hectare of rice grown in the Murrumbidgee provides habitat for 33,000 frogs. No doubt there are other species that have multiplied as a result of the development of water.

Surely the development of water through the dryer inland must be a good thing on all counts. It will change the nature of areas where it flows but for the better and not the worse. It will also add to the survival, and increase, of some of nature's wildlife as well as human development. It will at times help with flood mitigation.

A modern variant of the Bradfield scheme would be to build and/or enlarge dams in the Tully region and to then construct channels down into the headwaters of the Warrego or Nive rivers or possibly both. These rivers feed into the Darling river and so water could flow through to the Murray. Properties along the route could be allowed an allocation for irrigation as a recompense for going through their land.

A development of this nature will be there forever.

Instead of the government using money to take production away it would be far wiser to use it for a win on all counts. 1. for the environment.

2. for the inland communities

3. to increase production and hence taxable income.

Let those ideologically opposed to development have a change of heart and support another development for the long term common good.