

Additional Comments – Hon Dr Sharman Stone MP

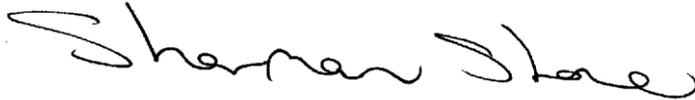
Of necessity, this inquiry was conducted over a few short weeks and should be considered a supplement to the first report of this committee: “Of Droughts and Flooding Rains”, June 2011.

The additional evidence received for this report reinforced many of the submissions made to the first inquiry, leaving me in no doubt that the majority of stakeholders still seek to achieve a Plan that is a balance between achieving environmental sustainability, maintaining viable communities and thriving regional economies. I endorse the view that these elements are interdependent.

The terms of reference required us, among other things, to report on Commonwealth progress in the recovery of water for the environment through irrigation infrastructure investments and purchase.

I wish to restate that the overwhelming evidence from Basin stakeholders continues to identify that the most effective ways to achieve a sustainable environment without destroying regional economies is to find any further savings needed through investment in improved water efficiencies on farms and in irrigation or stock and domestic systems; in additional environmental works and measures and in improved river management. I strongly support those who argue that no water should be purchased for the Commonwealth Water Holder through the irrigator’s water market. This distorts prices and strands assets. Strategic buy-back of water should only be considered through a different process and only after there is comprehensive and independent analysis of third party impacts, in particular the immediate and longer term impacts on the regional economy and communities.

The Committee's first report "Of Droughts and Flooding Rains" deliberately did not specify a preferred SDL volume, on the understanding that a single figure without appropriate recognition of savings already found, or committed from all sources and without a scientific understanding of the eco-systems needs, was meaningless. I continue to strongly support that view.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sharman Stone". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with some loops and flourishes.

Hon Dr Sharman Stone

5 July 2012