

Submission into the Inquiry into the management and use of Commonwealth environmental water

Tony Alessi

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Thank you for considering this submission, which addresses terms of reference No 4 re community engagement.... And in a more general sense the other terms of references

My submission addresses what I see as a critical part of the engagement with the community, the use of Language. And while language is critical to how you engage with the community, language also informs our view on an issue and by extension how decision makers interpret their role and the ultimate purpose of the decisions made and their outcomes!

My main concern is the use of the term “environmental water” I would respectfully suggest that a more accurate term would be “community water” for a number of reasons.

Rivers and their water flows are community assets. They belong to the community. Communities will use their water for various purposes, urban, social, tourism, horticulture, agriculture and environment.

The term “environmental water” has been hijacked by certain interests which have a vested interest in maintaining an adversarial environment around this issue. They use it in a negative sense and create division between so called “greenies” and farmers (eg cotton, rice) when in reality they should all be sharing a community resource. The real issue is corporate farms who have little or no vested interest in their local communities. One can only imagine the magnified uproar if Barnaby Joyce was in a Shepparton pub drinking beer and bragging about pinching community water to help (corporate) farmers!

The “environmental water” was purchased using \$13 billion of taxpayer money! That makes it “community water”. It was purchased to maintain flows in the rivers for community use, including the environment.