

The Standing Committee on Agriculture and Water Resources

Inquiry into water use efficiency in Australian agriculture

30/3/2017

To whom it may concern,

I offer the following comments in regard to the above inquiry as person with a lifetimes experience in irrigated agriculture in Victoria's Goulburn Valley.

The current programs associated with on-farm water efficiency programs are based on flawed assumed water savings that favour water entitlement holders, both in the retained water savings and the price paid for water for the environment. The most effective water use efficiency and productivity gains have resulted from COAG water reforms; the separation of land and water, water markets and carryover facilities. Without these reforms many industries would not have survived the millennium drought.

I consider the current programs associated with returning water to the environment offer very poor returns to Commonwealth and taxpayers. The most efficient means of water recovery is the direct purchase of water entitlements followed by the targeted retirement of inefficient irrigation areas.

Australia is not capable of feeding the world and should concentrate on niche markets of high returns. We have to move away from the supply of bulk commodities and embrace leading edge technologies. It is essential that the nation consolidate out water resources by implementing the Basin Plan to secure a sustainable foundation for our irrigated industries.

John Pettigrew