

SUBMISSION NO. 13

Secretary: *after***RECEIVED**

19 AUG 2002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES  
AND FORESTRY**Emailed 19/8/2002**

Committee Secretary  
Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

### **Inquiry into future water supplies for Australia's rural industries and communities**

The South West Development Commission welcomes the initiative by the House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, to undertake a detailed and wide ranging inquiry into current and future water availability in rural Australia.

The following comments are provided from a regional perspective gained from experience in the South West of Western Australia.

The South West Development Commission's objective, in relation to water management and use within the South West Region, is to ensure adequate sustainable supplies of suitable quality water for the region, allocated and used in an efficient and equitable manner. This has been an objective for the region for many years and continues to hold true.

The following water management and use issues facing the region have also been current for some time:

- Priorities given to areas of environmental significance.
- Statewide needs for potable water.
- Quantifying surface water and groundwater resource.
- Impact of climatic change on activities.
- Management of catchments.
- Priorities for allocation of the resource.
- Allocation of water to industry and agriculture.
- Maintenance of irrigation infrastructure.

It is considered imperative that all stakeholders throughout all regions are in the best possible position to use our water supplies in a sustainable, efficient and affordable way, so as to ensure the long-term growth and development of regional and rural Australia.

The Commission believes that the Commonwealth Government can contribute significantly towards this goal through four mechanisms:



ABN 23 250 505 809  
9th Floor Bunbury Tower, 61 Victoria Street  
Bunbury, Western Australia 6230  
PO Box 2000, Bunbury WA 6231  
Telephone: 08 9792 2000 ■ Facsimile: 08 9791 3223  
Email: swdc@gateway.net.au ■ website: www.swdc.wa.gov.au



## **1. Research and Development**

It is suggested that the Commonwealth Government take a greater role, in co-operation with State authorities, in research and development in this area. Commonwealth investment in research to assess the 'big picture'- including water supply availability, hydrology and projected water use – for each region, will provide much needed data collection and analysis on which to base future decisions.

Research on surface and ground water sources to ascertain what is a sustainable level of usage is imperative.

Research on the technology of desalination and its implementation is another area needing further investigation.

## **2. Taxation Framework**

The idea of providing taxation incentives to ensure that infrastructure (of any sort) supports the efficient and sustainable use of water, should be seriously considered.

For example, provide assistance to:

- construct and use private dams;
- encourage high volume users to invest in new equipment which is more efficient in its water use;
- usage of saline and hyper-saline water for industry; and
- encourage use of sensors to control water irrigation systems (to allow irrigation to be based on water needs).

The suggestion relating to sensor equipment also raises the issue of upgrading communications technology in regional areas to allow appropriate use of such equipment.

## **3. Grants Framework**

A grants program such as Natural Heritage Trust, that could support the industry sector to make more efficient use of water, is recommended.

## **4. Salinity**

It is suggested that the current arrangement of dollar for dollar funding with the States to address this issue needs to be reconsidered. Salinity is an extensive, debilitating condition that is having a major negative impact on the growth and development of regional and rural Australia. It is worthy of increased financial assistance from the Commonwealth Government.

3.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment as part of this important Inquiry.

Yours faithfully

*Carol Devitt*

CAROL DEVITT  
CHAIRMAN

15 August 2002