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Dear Sir/ Madam,

This note follows Tony Windsor's interview in Mr John Faine's conversation Hour on 774 ABC Radio this morning 15/10/10. The matters raised in this interview and the comments made by Mr Simon Crean, Minister for Regional Australia are of great interest to our local communities in Bridgewater and Inglewood.

Bridgewater and Inglewood are located some 25 Kms north west of Bendigo and are supplied with water from the Loddon River at Bridgewater.

The Loddon River Basin has been identified in the Guide to the proposed Basin Plan as having to reduce the water take by between 40-45% and this is seen by many as placing further pressure on local river diverters and the economic future of the two towns.

To better understand how this situation could be improved the Inglewood Study Group has been researching possible alternative sources of water to that provided by the Loddon River.

This research has now revealed a number of possible solutions to the provision of a long term water solution to the towns of Bridgewater and Inglewood as well as providing more water to the Loddon River.

Because the Inglewood Study Group is not affiliated with any particular interest group it has become apparent that the research we have undertaken and the methodology that we think could be used in developing a water plan for our two towns could be of great interest to Mr Windsor and Minister Crean.

In developing our Water plan we have been aware of the needs of the Basin Plan and for this reason we made a submission to the Issues Paper, Development of Sustainable Diversion Limits for the Murray Darling Basin. This submission can be accessed at www.mdba.gov.au under the title Inglewood Study Group.

In this submission you will see that it is our group's strong view that proper and "fair" allocation of available useable water must start with an understanding of the relevant sub-catchment.

In our case it is the Bullabul Creek Sub-Catchment.

From the viewpoint of the Inglewood Study Group it has been disappointing that in the engagement process undertaken by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority in our district there has been no interest in applying our suggestions.

On hearing the intentions that are now being considered by the newly elected Labour Government to work through the mechanism of a review committee chaired by Mr Windsor it now seems possible that the work done by the ISG may be of considerable interest to the workings of this review.

To assist in bringing this research to the attention of the review committee we have recently requested Mr Steve Gibbons [Federal Labour Member for Bendigo] to arrange a meeting between our Study Group and Minister Crean. We are still awaiting a reply from this request which was made on 11/10/10.

It may now be possible having regard to the time allowed for the review committee [April 2011] to make its recommendations to the Parliament that both Minister Crean and Mr Windsor may like to meet with the Inglewood Study Group and even visit Inglewood and Bridgewater to see how this proposed water plan would work.

To assist in this process any proposals that Mr Windsor is developing including the terms of reference for the review committee would be helpful.

Further information that may assist in understanding what the ISG has done is available in a research paper recently given by Dr Dona Martin at the Third National Country Towns Conference 2010 at La Trobe University Bendigo. A copy of this paper can be obtained from Dr Martin.

Regards,

John Hancock
Assisting coordination for better water at Bridgewater and Inglewood