



Hon Stephen Robertson MP
Member for Stretton



**Queensland
Government**

**Minister for Natural Resources,
Mines and Energy and
Minister for Trade**

Ref CTS 13089/10

17 AUG 2010

Mr Stephen Palethorpe
Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Environment, Communication and the Arts
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Palethorpe

I refer to the Inquiry into the Water (Crisis Powers and Floodwater Diversion) Bill 2010 being conducted by the Committee and tender this letter as Queensland's submission to the Inquiry.

Queensland recognises that the long period of drought in the Murray-Darling Basin continues to threaten the viability of environmental assets, urban water supplies and irrigation communities, and supports the need to return the system to a sustainable level of management, consistent with the principles of the National Water Initiative and agreed management framework.

Queensland strongly supports the current framework provided by the Agreement on Murray-Darling Basin Reform (MDB IGA) signed by First Ministers of the Commonwealth and Basin jurisdictions in July 2008, to establish a sustainable management regime for the future of the Basin's water resources. Under this framework, Queensland, along with the other Basin states, has referred certain powers to the Commonwealth to enable the effective operation of the *Water Act 2007* (Cwlth) and the development of a single Basin-wide plan for this purpose.

Under this framework, Queensland has also committed to implementing a number of significant reforms in the Basin, as well as participating with the Commonwealth in key projects to improve the efficiency of water use and to return additional water to the Basin in the national interest. Queensland is also supporting the Commonwealth's buy-back of water entitlements from willing sellers in the northern part of the Basin to return more water to the system to enhance downstream riverine environmental assets.

The Bill as drafted raises concerns that, in crisis situations, water plans might be overridden without consultation, appeal or compensation. This would undermine the security of entitlements and the market principles underlying national water reform. The prospect of unilateral changes to state water shares, is equally concerning to Queensland.

Level 17
61 Mary Street Brisbane Qld 4000
PO Box 15216 City East
Queensland 4002 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3225 1861
Facsimile +61 7 3225 1828
Email nrmet@ministerial.qld.gov.au

The Bill uses the height of Lake Alexandrina as a trigger for crisis powers. From a Queensland perspective, this would result in unduly long periods of crisis powers and give the appearance of a narrowly focussed intent.

Queensland considers that the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, together with the agreed reform actions underway, is the proper basis for management of drought and climate change in the Basin and that management of crisis situations should be part of that plan. Accordingly Queensland does not support the Water (Crisis Powers and Floodwater Diversion) Bill 2010.

Should you have any further enquiries in relation to this matter, please do not hesitate to contact Mr Randall Cox, Director, Strategic Water Policy of the Department of Environment and Resource Management

Yours sincerely

STEPHEN ROBERTSON MP