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19th March 2011

Submission to the
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committees
Inquiry into the Provisions of the *Water Act 2007*

EFN represents farmers in south-east Australia interested in sustainable farming in a social, environmental and economic sense. We represent mostly commercial farmers very concerned about: the impact of climate change on farms, people and landscapes; loss of farm biodiversity; and, the loss of farmland and relatively natural areas to urban expansion. Our policies and previous submissions are available at www.environmentalfarmersnetwork.net.au.

We believe the Water Act 2007 reflects the stated intent of all political parties at the time, has had bi-partisan support of two parliaments and has the capability to achieve sustainable extraction levels for ecosystems as well as continued productive use.

The Act is based on recognition that long term social and economic values depend on environmental health and addresses the tensions between environmental, social and economic needs in fair and reasonable manner.

Any amendments to the Act is likely to impact on the constitutional standing of the current legislation which has been specifically designed to maximise Federal influence on water entitlements with-in the Murray Darling Basin.

Legislation to change the Water Act 2007 would create further uncertainty in the irrigation industry and almost certainly move the MDBA into caretaker mode bringing to a halt all work on the Basin Plan. We support the Water Act 2007 in its current form and the Basin Plan's ability to identify sustainable diversion limits whilst maximizing social and economic opportunities.

John Pettigrew
Water Spokesperson
Environmental Farmers Network