SUBMISSION NO. 128

FNB:CLB GF/060.010.04
Fnb/coulet inquiry water supplies1

28th August 2002

Frank Brennan

Clerk Assistant (Committees)
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

Re : Inquiry into Future Water Supplies for Australia's Rural Industries and Communities

Council is in receipt of advice from the Member for Barker, Patrick Secker MP, in relation to the Inquiry being conducted by the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry into future water supplies for Australia's industries and communities.

Please find attached Council's formal submission to the Inquiry. I take this opportunity to thank you for your invitation to participate in the Inquiry process. Council looks forward to outcome of your Inquiry with some optimism for the future water supply needs for the benefit of all Australians.

If you wish to discuss this matter please do not hesitate to contact me at your convenience.

Yours sincerely

F.N. (Frank) Brennan
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Encl :

SUBMISSION TO THE
INQUIRY INTO THE FUTURE WATER SUPPLIES FOR
AUSTRALIA'S INDUSTRIES AND COMMUNITIES

1. LEGISLATIVE CONTROL

- There is a need to ensure that future water supplies are protected.
- The use of legislative controls to protect and guarantee our water supplies is of paramount importance, with such legislative controls including –
  - Development and Planning Controls to protect water supplies from inappropriate forms of development.
  - Catchment Planning – the introduction of catchment plans across Australia to provide monitoring programs; limit extraction from water supplies; water allocation guidelines and water quality triggers would be supported.
  - Water Resource Legislation – the uniform approach across all States and Territories to managing its water resources would be welcomed to ensure a consistent approach to water resource management.
  - Environment Protection Legislation – the licensing and monitoring of industries to ensure water supplies, particularly groundwater, are protected from point source pollution and degradation.

2. SURFACE WATER

- The over drainage of our agricultural lands should be regulated.
- Outflows from drainage going to the sea should be channelled and redirected where possible to our coastal and inland lakes and swamps, as a means of ensure the survival of a coastal and inland lake ecologies.
- Greater use should be made of our existing aquifers for the storage of water from surface water drainage scheme.
- The opportunities for the redirection or inland piping (and utilisation) of current surface waters flowing into the sea should be investigated. Care would need to be taken to ensure that the groundwater/sea water interface and therefore salinity potentials are monitored before such schemes are implemented. This would require solid scientific investigation to substantiate the ecological sustainability of such schemes.

3. FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

- Financial incentives should be offered to industries and water users who are prepared to capture, treat and recycle their process waters.

4. IRRIGATION

- Incentives should be made available for irrigators to adopt and implement the most efficient and effective irrigation methods available.
- A cessation to flood irrigation should be encouraged in favour of drip or spray irrigation systems and technologies.
- Water should be charges for on a volumetric basis at a rate determined by its availability.

5. MURRAY-DARLING CATCHMENT

- The Federal Government and not the States should administer the Murray-Darling Catchment area. Funding for the administration and operation of the Catchment should be provided by the States, with the current level of Federal funding being maintained in real terms.

6. OTHER MATTERS

- The development of an integrated reticulated system of water pipelines linking areas and regions (even across State borders) to enable the free trading of water would improve access to water supplies for communities and industries. This system would work in a similar fashion to the national electricity grid.