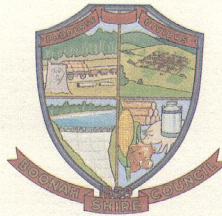


ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO  
BE ADDRESSED TO THE  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**



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## **BOONAH SHIRE COUNCIL**

29 August 2002

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

*Our Reference:*  
**CIDO:DWTS:815/07**

Dear Minister

### **Inquiry into Future Water Supplies for Australia's Rural Industries and Communities**

Boonah Shire Council is pleased to provide a response on behalf of the community of Boonah Shire, South East Queensland. In keeping with the format of the inquiries letter of request, Boonah Shire's responses are listed in the attached document and in no particular rank of importance.

Boonah Shire is a small rural community covering an area of 1900 sq km and situated 88 kilometres south west of Brisbane. Approximately 60 percent of the 8200 population draws some form of income from agricultural activity and agriculture is the economic backbone of the Region.

Water is an issue that is a fundamental and essential component of this industry and primary producers are aware of its value and are adopting current best practice methodologies to maximise their water use efficiency. However, these same primary producers are not maximising their opportunities to promote the extent of their achievements in natural resource management. Primary producers still suffer from historical and guilt by association arguments presented by other stakeholders. Water resource management must become a national issue understood and used sustainably by all Australians.

The Queensland State Government is currently working in association with the South East Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (SEQROC) in producing the SEQ Regional Water Supply Strategy. The basic concept should be recognised as a good initiative, however without consensus about the methodologies behind the science and research the question is, can a strategy be produced that is acceptable to the majority of stakeholders in South East Queensland? Further to this, what potential position does this place Queensland water resource management in when compared to other States within Australia? Without a bi-partisan agreement and consultation on a national level between the Commonwealth, States and stakeholders this uncertainty will be an impediment to the implementation of any future findings produced.

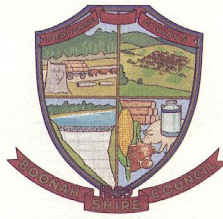
Boonah Shire Council urges the Commonwealth to embrace this issue of water resource management and provide the necessary leadership, direction, innovation and resources to ensure equitable outcomes for stakeholders and sustainability of this natural resource.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further please do not hesitate in contacting Council's Director for Works and Technical Services, Patrick Murphy or Community and Industry Development Officer, Cameron Seagrave on ph (07) 5463 3000.

Yours faithfully

**John Brent**  
Mayor

**Ian Flint**  
Chief Executive Officer



## Inquiry Into Future Water Supplies For Australia's Rural Industries and Communities

### Boonah Shire Council's Response to the Terms of Reference

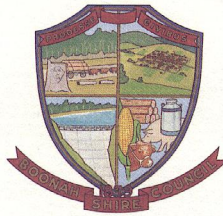
#### Key Recommendations.

1. *Water is a national issue and the Commonwealth must take control;*
2. *Water resource management must be elevated to a level of high national significance and maintained at this level through adoption of sustainable and practical policies, capital investment and promotion i.e. Minister for Water;*
3. *All Australian's will share in the positive economic outcomes generated by managing water in a sustainable manner. Therefore the cost of implementing any change should be shared nationally as well.*
4. *Investment in infrastructure must be shared by all stakeholders, Australia-wide; and*
5. *The cost of water must be determined first in order for the nation to effectively gain an understanding of its value as a part of everyday life*
6. *Water is a part of natural resource management and should never be over shadowed or lost to arguments involving other areas of natural resource management*

#### Addressing the Terms of Reference

##### **The role of the Commonwealth in ensuring adequate and sustainable supply in rural and regional Australia.**

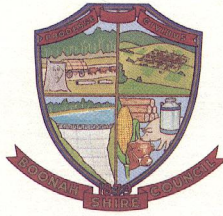
- The Commonwealth should define in a clear and precise manner the definitions of "adequate", "sustainable", "supply", "rural" and "regional". This definition should be ratified across all levels of government Australia wide;
- The Commonwealth should ensure all States adopt a uniform and bi-partisan approach to ensuring adequate and sustainable supply in rural and regional Australia;
- The Commonwealth should seek consensus with the States that water is an essential building block for long-term sustainable development within rural and regional Australia. In doing so, a benchmark needs analysis of rural and regional Australia should be designed and implemented across Australia;
- The Commonwealth should consider placing water under its umbrella of control and become the ultimate manager of water resources. This would assist in removing water use/sustainability policy development from the States;
- The Commonwealth should in furthering the development and importance of this issue, develop a Minister for Water Resources portfolio;
- The Commonwealth should consider removing the rural versus urban ethic, in attempting to maximise rural participation, contribution and ownership of this issue. This could potentially reduce urban based bureaucratic dominance of an issue that is primarily a rural issue (rural water use 70% versus urban water use 30%);
- The Commonwealth should provide suitable incentives for all stakeholders in setting the future direction of water resource management;



- The Commonwealth should ensure on-ground outcomes are the major focus and outcome of water resource reform and not just the production of strategies and associated research;
- The Commonwealth should clearly communicate its role to all Australians in a simplistic and clear manner that encourages stakeholders to commit ideals of water resource management; and
- The Commonwealth should assist stakeholders in determining what is the value of water and what are inefficient and efficient water use practices.

**Commonwealth policies and programs, in rural and regional Australia that could underpin stability of storage and supply of water for domestic consumption and other purposes.**

- The Commonwealth should have a National policy of water resource management. This policy should clearly define the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders;
- The Commonwealth should develop clear guidelines for implementation;
- The Commonwealth should develop a policy on pricing. Pricing should be viewed with the aim of being consistent across rural and regional Australia to remove competitive advantage gained through cost of water. However for this to be fair and equitable, delivery infrastructure must be uniform across Australia;
- The Commonwealth should develop a policy ensuring infrastructure is managed sustainably and at a level that delivers sustainable social, economic as well as sustainable environmental outcomes;
- The Commonwealth should develop a policy that minimises the opportunity for monopolies to develop in the management of water resources;
- The Commonwealth should develop a policy which minimises the opportunity of water resource management to become solely a business orientated, profit making opportunity. However this policy must reflect sufficient flexibility to allow any schemes/projects implemented to be virtually or totally self funding;
- The Commonwealth should consider developing policies based around the provision of taxation benefits or incentives such as depreciation of initial investment in first year to encourage the adoption of water use efficient methodologies;
- The Commonwealth should develop policies and programs for the clear and effective education and awareness campaigns;
- The Commonwealth should develop policies and programs on funding schemes to assist in the adoption of suitable infrastructure across Australia and the level of capital contribution post implementation phase;
- The Commonwealth should develop a policy on setting a realistic timeframe for the adoption of all policies and compliance;
- The Commonwealth should develop a policy and program for rewarding compliance and penalty for non compliance;
- The Commonwealth should develop a policy and program for continual monitoring and evaluation of water resource management;
- The Commonwealth should develop a policy of appeal to ensure procedural fairness in implementing water resource management improvements;
- The Commonwealth should develop a policy which allows stakeholders to provide feedback as a part of the on-going evaluation process; and
- Commonwealth policies should be linked with other State and Federal policies for example, risk management for flood management, national action plan for salinity and water quality.

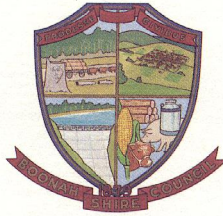


### **The effect of Commonwealth policies and programs on current and future water use in Australia**

- The policies and programs offered across State and Federal agencies are not easily accessed and awareness of them is often limited to the discovery process associated when determining the feasibility of a particular project;
- COAG resulted in State governments implementing some of the reforms, however suitable implementation guidelines were lacking allowing each State to place their own interpretation about the reforms;
- COAG resulted in a non-uniform Australia-wide water resource management strategy;
- Queensland State Government as a result of COAG has not displayed a suitable level of disclosure about reinvestment by way of capital investment into water infrastructure improvements or alternatively investing in major programs for water use efficiency infrastructure;
- Commonwealth policies have not clearly defined the level or standards for compliance which the States need because of varying levels of scientific research available across Australia;
- COAG did not encourage an adequate stakeholder consultation process and lacked suitable strategies for education of the broader community about the goals and objectives of such reforms. This enabled the reforms to be impacted by State political processes and policies; and
- The perceived lack of coordination of Commonwealth policies and programs has impacted on the establishment of a coordinated approach to water resource management and therefore must be reviewed across all agencies and brought together under one umbrella of control and administration.

### **Commonwealth policies and programs that could address and balance the competing demands on water resources.**

- The Commonwealth should develop a policy which aims to address water resource management holistically by removing terminology such as rural and urban;
- The Commonwealth must develop a policy which enables suitable levels of funding for scientific investigation and compilation of data in order to set achievable benchmark targets for water resource management across Australia for all stakeholders to adopt;
- The Commonwealth must assist States in formulating suitable policies for issues relating to water resource management such as water resource planning, water trading, land clearing and vegetation management;
- The Commonwealth should develop programs which assist in the education of all stakeholders about the contribution of every individual's actions on the water resource management issue, thereby reducing the need to associate stakeholders with rural and urban environments; and
- The Commonwealth should develop a program in conjunction with all States to fund installation of infrastructure to minimise the losses in current distribution systems and research into innovative water use technologies.



**The adequacy of scientific research on the approaches required for adaptation to climate variability and better weather prediction, including the reliability of forecasting systems and capacity to provide specialist forecasts.**

- The Commonwealth should continue to provide innovative programs which encourage scientific research in the above areas;
- The Commonwealth should develop suitable programs which deliver this information within a scientifically acceptable timeframe and at a level easily accessed by end users;
- The Commonwealth should adopt scientific research standards which all stakeholders accept first before undertaking any future research program;
- Climate variability is only one portion of the scientific puzzle and the Commonwealth should ensure that the scientific research covers all aspects of water resource management and that the results achieved through the research can be used; and
- The Commonwealth should ensure that suitable programs and policies are developed which ensure this research does not impact on the level and nature of programs implemented in order to deliver real and measurable on-ground outcomes.

Secretary: ...*A. Lee*...

**RECEIVED**

- 5 SEP 2002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES  
AND FORESTRY