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The Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee
on Environment and Heritage
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT

This submission is in support of the case for greater government involvement in catchment management.

In an era in which our democratic representatives are continually finding excuses for not doing things and trying to focus on “the big picture”, our nation is literally “going down the gurgler”.

For many years government policy has been directed towards privatisation and “reducing the size of government”. There has never been any hesitancy to involve our nation in overseas wars - the Gulf War and the Kosovo Crisis are two most recent events which have cost Australia millions of dollars, but there was no financial justification for Australian tax dollars being spent in this way.

Why do we waste money like this?

While this has been going on, a greater war is needed to be fought that is right on our doorstep, in fact, the enemy is inside our house, and yet our governments seem blind to its presence.

When questions are asked about fighting this common enemy, we are told “the expense will be too great” and so the enemy has more time to gather strength and Australia loses more ground to this foe. Our resources are weakened so we have less to fight with.

I refer to the problems associated with CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT.

If there is one continent in the whole world that should be on top of all aspects of Catchment Management, it is Australia. Unfortunately, our approach is piecemeal and

reactive, uncoordinated and apathetic. Catchment Management is left the individual or small groups, at best Local Government may play a role in undoing some of the damage by attempting to patch problems or co-ordinate Land Care groups, but in the main the situation is a disaster waiting to happen.

The recent floods in Wollongong NSW were a classic example of lack of Catchment Management. Floods in Bunbury and Moora WA are further examples of the sort of problems that occur to settled and agricultural areas because no one really has the interest or power to do anything to prevent problems.

The list of these sorts of problems is extensive and increases each year.

Then of course we have the salination problem suffered increasingly by farmers across Australia's wheatbelts and elsewhere.

This is another example of the lack of Catchment Management.

One would imagine that with the power of satellite mapping, geological and geographic surveys, historical records and practical experience, Australia would be able to better manage catchments, salt invasion and flooding from storm cycles.

If our National Leaders took some of the funds that have been wasted on war and will be wasted on war in other, far flung corners of the globe, and used this money to create a National Catchment Management Authority to develop a strategy to overcome this developing problem, our whole nation would be more prosperous, secure and insulated from the suffering and despair that we now endure.

We were once world renowned for our Snowy Mountains Scheme - a Catchment Management plan - it mobilised men and materials to provide a more prosperous farming environment for the Murray valley.

What is need now is a more subtle but broader scheme that:

1. Identifies all the catchments in Australia
2. Determines the problems associated with each individual catchment
3. Relates the problems of each catchment with its neighbour
4. Ranks the problems
5. Determines the range of solutions needed in each catchment
6. Establishes a priority for the each solution
7. Develop a financing plan
8. Recruit unemployed men
9. Gets on with it

Instead of recruiting men to go to war overseas, they should be recruited into an "army" to apply all the practical solutions that we do know but are reluctant to apply. In fact, the Australian Army would be a very good place to start, part of the annual exercises could

be associated with the planning, coordinating and engineering that is necessary for this sort of national defence

Some of the solutions include:

1. Drainage - pumps and pipes to carry away saline and surplus water
2. Revegetation - to restore landscapes, stabilise soil and use up surplus groundwater
3. Damming - to store water for use and divert water from one catchment into another
4. Training - to educate farmers, industry and the general population about the situation and what role they play as groups and individuals
5. Scientific study - to create new and more appropriate water uses and management

The need is there. It will take a national government approach to achieve a solution.

People laughed when C Y O'Conner proposed the water pipeline from Perth to Kalgoorlie, but without that pipeline, the national wealth that the mines have produced for 100 years, and continuing, would never have been achieved.

Today gas pipes are laid across Australia from East to West and from North to South and no one blinks at the idea. These skills and technology are here in Australia and can be put into action to save our nation from the problems due to lack of Catchment Management.

What is needed is willpower and courage. We will all benefit.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R W Bradley".

R W Bradley