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27 June 2008

Ms J Holmes
The Secretary
Standing Committee on Climate Change, Water,
Environment and the Arts
House of Representatives
Parliament House
PO Box 6021
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Holmes

Inquiry into climate change and environmental impacts on coastal communities

NFF welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the above inquiry. NFF understands that the Inquiry will investigate issues around climate change and the consequential environmental pressures in coast systems particularly in the context of population growth.

Population growth in coastal areas, particularly in the eastern States, is predicted to dramatically increase. Inevitably this will place various pressures on those systems and exacerbate the competition between competing uses of resources (urban and rural). Of particular interest to the NFF is the manner in which population increases will affect demands on the agricultural sector.

Coastal systems are unique, and vary on a catchment by catchment basis. As an example, water systems are unregulated, there is generally a short time to utilise the water resource from upper catchment to ocean and there is little infrastructure to store water for future use.

The most likely demand by increasing population will be for a greater share by coastal urban communities for the limited supplies of water resources – placing further stress on the system. Governments must ensure that local governments have the capacity and put in place proper planning to adapt to the higher demand. In the first instance, installation of metering and monitoring systems (such as telemetry) is a prerequisite to informing water planning.

Integrated planning is part of the solution for coastal systems, along with reviews of such aspects as harvestable rights or farm dams policies. Some of this will undoubtedly fall to local and state governments. However, the onus is on the Federal Government to ensure that the higher level strategic inter-governmental arrangements (e.g. COAG water reform and

National Water Initiative) are sufficiently robust and cover the specific issues of coastal systems.

In addition to planning, solutions will include utilising the market to purchase water entitlements for the increased urban demand, or investing in infrastructure to deliver alternative supplies (e.g. desalination plants).

In summary, the NFF supports an integrated approach to planning for increased population in coastal systems. Such planning needs to be informed by the best available information and science (including the effects of climate change on resources). Solutions will include a review of current state based legislation and planning, an investment in infrastructure for the future (e.g. public and farm based dams, improved recycling of storm water and desalination plants), and that future demands for increased urban water supplies is sourced from the market.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Fargher', written in a cursive style.

BEN FARGHER
Chief Executive Officer