SUBMISSION NO 52

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Secretary: .....

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES
AND FORESTRY

Mr Ian Dundas
Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
R1.110 Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir,

Re: Water Inquiry

I would like to take this opportunity to respond following a call for public submissions in regard to the current Water Inquiry.

At the time of writing this submission rural Australia is once again experiencing the climatic extremes that are a feature of this continent. Unfortunately a prolonged rainfall deficit, or drought, as we are currently experiencing has widespread effects not only on the environment, but also the nation's economy and the social wellbeing of affected areas, generally rural and regional towns and centres. This triple bottom line effect of drought should mean that it is in the interest of all governments to take action to alleviate not only the impact but the likelihood of rainfall deficits if at all possible.

A Public Meeting held at the University of Sydney, Orange in Orange NSW on Tuesday 6 August, 2002 provided an overview of the technology being used in Tasmania with significant success to increase available rainfall. To ensure sufficient supplies of water are available in dams across Tasmania for the generation of hydro-electric power, Hydro Tasmania puts to use the latest technology and research available to augment natural rainfall and increase water supplies. Cloudseeding technology available today is the result of extensive research, both in Australia and in overseas countries such as Israel and the United States, to use modern technology to enhance rainfall in predominantly arid areas. In Tasmania's case it is to ensure sufficient supplies of water to meet the demand for electricity. Cloudseeding research in Australia was commenced by CSIRO. Hyrdo Tasmania have followed on from this research and are now leaders in the practical application of cloudseeding and ongoing research.

It is estimated that cloudseeding could result in a 15 – 20% increase in available rainfall in NSW. The Public Meeting in Orange was attended by representatives from government agencies, farmer organisations, irrigators and State and Federal government representatives. The meeting was advised that a 15 – 20% increase in natural rainfall would be a worthwhile increase.

For the past 200 years the inland areas of Australia have made extensive use of limited water supplies to become a world leader in terms of agricultural production. The use of the latest technology and skill of Australia farmers has enabled this achievement, despite the continent being among the driest in the world. Unfortunately, the impact of our agricultural practices and the limited available of water, is now known to be significant and widespread. Achieving a balance between environmental needs and a return on the infrastructure and social capital invested in rural and regional Australia will be one of the most important challenges to face Australia in this decade. It is vital to establish a sustainable future for rural and regional communities now if Australia is to maintain a strong economy and to grow as a nation.

The potential for cloudseeding technology to be used to achieve an increase of 15 – 20% in available rainfall is significant. This could ensure an immediate increase in environmental flows of 15 – 20%, and more if greater water use efficiencies in agriculture continue to be encouraged, but at the same time ensuring alternative means for sustaining rural and regional communities are developed (for example RIRDC New Industries Development Program).

We very strongly urge the Inquiry to seriously consider a trial of cloudseeding in the mainland states of Australia, of an appropriate duration to enable full environmental, economic and social studies to be undertaken.

Yours sincerely,

Trevor Goodridge **Jane Goodridge**