

63761329

PAGE 1 OF 5

SUBMISSION NO 34

Secretary: *AK*

SUBMISSION INTO  
 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
 STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
 AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES  
 AND FORESTRY

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Firstly, thank you for the opportunity to have some input into this much needed enquiry.

My primary focus is on the N.E of Tasmania, where personal experience gives local knowledge of the issues at hand.

At present, we are privileged to have many pristine streams in forested catchments, along with ecologically degraded rivers, with the ongoing threat of dams (in rivers) to provide irrigation for newly cleared land with marginal soils previously unsuitable for cropping. As well, many of our forested catchments are being clear felled at an alarming rate.

Terms of reference: The role of the Commonwealth in ensuring adequate + sustainable supply of water....

: Given that water is provided by nature, not humans + legislation - it is essential to protect the biodiversity within living ecosystems which filters, feeds, and maintains such systems. The damming of rivers, excessive irrigation, clearfelling of forested catchments is essentially short term \$ gain for long term degradation. (The Snowy River a classic illustration).

The Commonwealth has therefore a MORAL as well as social obligation to legislate for

63761329

PAGE 2 of 5

change in the continual misuse of a precious natural resource. It is essential for the body with the power to ENACT IN LAW all the recommendations made via untold millions of brochures, NHT projects, environmental management strategies ad infinitum, even ad nauseum.

These recommendations are for the most part conveniently ignored, flouted or circumvented when short term \$ gains can be made for individuals or companies.

In the NE of Tasmania, (as in many other parts of the state) the greatest threat by far is the clearfelling of native forest for pulpwood (read toilet paper, newspaper, low quality fibreboard). To destroy natural systems which provide, filter and feed major rivers to provide low quality products is indeed blind mismanagement. That clearfelling & plantation establishment reduces flow by 30% is undisputed.

The much touted Forest Practice Code allows for chemical contamination via 1080 poison, napalm from firebombing, Triazine (hormone based) for weed management, and siltation via removal of vegetation & soil disturbance.

The total lack of protection for class 4 streams (FPC) is impossible to justify.

Imagine removing all the small veins in the body to only rely on the major arteries.

The myriad of small streams is vital to create the larger, as the natural vegetation in and around said streams essential to

to maintain health, flow & availability.

TERMS of REFERENCE (2) Commonwealth policies & programs  
... to underpin storage & supply stability.

The stability & supply of water is wholly dependent on availability. This availability is provided by nature. Protect nature and you have the solution. Whilst this may sound simplistic it is true. Maintenance of fully functioning systems & reparation of degraded rivers and landscapes will provide said stability, enaction of laws to prevent further degradation will produce long term positive results. This is far better than the current system of allowing more damage to be done, & then spending millions for repair of symptoms not causes.

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(3) : effects of Commonwealth programs/policies current & future.

For the future, I would encourage the Comm. Govt to support Tasmania's Water Quality Management strategy, to change the Forest Practice code in Relation to clearfelling in catchment areas as well as class 4 stream management. Also to provide permanent funding for Waterwatch & enshrine Natural Resource Management strategy within all municipal councils.

Currently, many beneficial & worthwhile

63761329

programs for water management are in place, but they are often blighted by funding reductions, uncertainty of future funding & excessive paper work to gain said funding. (Thus using many vital hours which could be spent 'on the ground' providing solutions.)

The reliance of the majority of on ground work being done by volunteers to maintain monitoring & water quality database is at best hopeful and at worst a lack of commitment by government to the very schemes it espouses to support.

(Even though at present Forestry Tasmania and Gunns are the perpetrators of much of the damage done to this precious resource, the Commonwealth Govt has the power if not the will to enforce change)

Through long term personal experience it is clear to me (and all those who seek solutions) that the policies for protection i.e. FPB, F.P.C., EMPCA, PEU & EDO can be thwarted, sidestepped, manipulated & misinterpreted to allow destructive practices to continue unabated.

(4) Comm. policies & programs that could address balance of competing demands

At present there are many programs in place to provide education & involvement in water issues. Landclearers - be they farmers or foresters - have the information, or at the very least access to it. Now is the time for

63761329

page 5 of 5

Govt, to implement laws rather than recommendations for sustainable land use. Millions have been spent by landcare & other schemes, & we still have clearing cropping/grazing on marginal land, creating more long term, often irreversible damage to catchment areas.

It is essential for Govt to impress upon land users via Legislation that the natural landscape provides for us, Not the other way around.

#### (5) Adequacy of scientific research or approaches...

Millions of dollars have been spent on scientific research to assess climate variability. While this information is vital if we are to avoid catastrophe with foreknowledge, the very actions which continue to contribute to climate change continue unchallenged except by the dedicated few.

This research, as well as an increased ability to provide increasingly complex & reliable forecasting, be it specialist or otherwise is useless to us if we don't have the natural landscapes remaining to minimise the effects of flooding & drought.

If the government - the commonwealth - is serious about protection, availability of useable water it must start first with protection of water sources, ie catchments, streams, rivers & lakes; by legislation & enforcement, after all, it is our common wealth!