

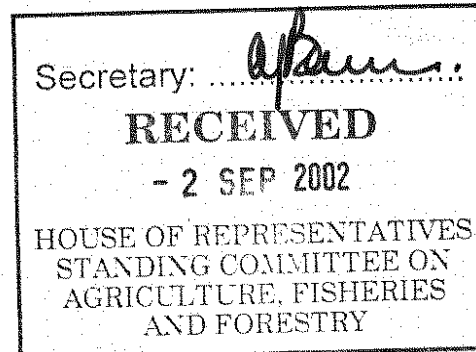
FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

NORTHERN
MIDLANDS
COUNCIL

Our Ref: KP:HG:AH
77050 (21/005)

28 August 2002

The Hon Kay Elson MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Agriculture
Fisheries and Forestry
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Mrs Elson

FUTURE WATER SUPPLIES FOR RURAL AUSTRALIA **House of Representatives Inquiry**

I refer to the inquiry into future water supplies for Australia's rural industries and communities being undertaken by the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

The Council wishes to lodge the attached submission to be considered by the Standing Committee. The statements are brief and to the point – however, if you require any details or explanation then please do not hesitate to contact the Council's Manager, Technical Services, Harry Galea.

The community of the Northern Midlands have consistently over the past 10 years identified 'water' as their highest priority issue. The council will support any measures to address the community's concerns and improve their social and economic well being.

Yours sincerely

Kim Polley
MAYOR

Enc :

1 Council submission

Cc:

1. The Hon Dick Adams MP, PO Box 50, Perth 7300
2. Council Briefing Report

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COMMONWEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE ON *FUTURE WATER SUPPLIES FOR AUSTRALIA'S RURAL INDUSTRIES AND COMMUNITIES*

SUBMISSION BY NORTHERN MIDLANDS COUNCIL, TASMANIA

- 1 Since the inception of the Northern Midlands Council in 1993, the community have consistently listed 'water' as the single highest priority for the Council. The community's concerns have ranged from the quality of potable water to the lack of secure irrigation water for cropping.
- 2 The farming industry are moving away from the traditional pasture-based rural commodities such as animal-fattening, dairy and wool, due to a decline in these commodities resulting in low or negative profitability and unsustainable enterprises. To survive, the industry has been diversifying into cropping and other irrigation-based commodities. The capital costs for diversification such as irrigation equipment and crop-establishment costs are high and can only be undertaken if a secure irrigation water supply is available.
- 3 The full value to the community of rural commodities cannot be realised solely on primary produce. The regional flow-on effects of value-adding and/or processing of primary produce is significant. Value-added crops and other irrigation-based commodities produce are far more profitable than dry-land pasture. The key chain of events is: water - leads to cropping - leads to processing - leads to greater profitability for the farmer and greater employment opportunities for regional Australia.
- 4 Drought proofing the rural community is essentially about the storage of water for use over the cropping season. Drought proofing is possible on an individual farm-by-farm basis or by strategically-based major irrigation reservoir schemes. The majority of the farming community would prefer a community-based irrigation scheme to minimise one of the significant input costs.
- 5 Each State Government authority should appoint a specialist statewide authority in order to provide a consistent and thorough dam-works approval process.
- 6 In certain catchments in Tasmania, the Hydro-Electric Corporation have sovereignty over river-run water. This is considered inequitable.
- 7 A reliable and value-added irrigation water supply is available by the re-use of treated effluent from municipal (and private) waste-water treatment plants.
- 8 Community expectations continue to become less tolerant of poor quality drinking water. No matter the size of the community, expectations are

that potable water should generally meet the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines. To meet the guidelines for very small communities is achievable but has always proven to be extremely unaffordable. The economies of scale experienced by larger water supplies are not available to these communities. The magnitude of this low economies of scale are very significant. An example is that the upgrade of a potable water supply to Longford/Perth/Evandale district (6000 residents) will add about \$150pa to their cost but similar improvements to Ross (300 residents) will mean a \$1500pa increase.

- 9 There is significant community expectation that authorities who are involved in the management of water conduct those responsibilities in an environmentally sustainable climate.
- 10 The key to the rural industry is drought-proofing and not irregular unsustainable rainfall such as cloud seeding.

Further Information:

Questions or clarifications on this submission should be directed to the Council's Manager, Technical Services, Harry Galea.

Contact details:

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