



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

MEDIA ALERT

Issued: 11 December 2002

Inquiry into future water supplies

Public hearing, Wednesday 11 December 2002

Land & Water Australia at inquiry into future water supplies for Australia's rural industries and communities

Land and Water Australia will be the next witness appearing before the House of Representatives Agriculture Committee's inquiry into current and future water availability.

Land and Water Australia is a Commonwealth statutory corporation charged with providing national leadership in generating knowledge, informing debate and inspiring innovation and action in sustainable natural resource management. Land and Water Australia is currently developing a new National Program for Sustainable Irrigation.

House Agriculture Committee Chair Mrs Kay Elson MP says that Land and Water Australia has raised a number of significant issues in its submission to the inquiry and that these would be explored at the public hearing.

"Land and Water advised the committee that there is increasing competition for water in Australia in an environment in which many regions will be facing diminishing supplies," Mrs Elson said. "Land and Water describe this as a 'water squeeze'."

The "squeeze", Land and Water claim, has been caused from a combination of:

- (a) increasing industry and consumer demand;
- (b) the urgent need to re-allocate water to aquatic ecosystems in some locations;
- (c) climate change leading to higher temperatures, higher evaporation, lower rainfall and significantly lower runoff; and
- (d) revegetation of catchments for biodiversity, salinity and erosion benefits combined with plantation and agroforestry for commercial purposes, reducing runoff.

In its submission Land and Water says these issues are likely to increase rapidly in magnitude in the next decades.

"Land and Water told the committee that it is essential that medium to long term planning, whether for catchment rehabilitation, water allocation or industry infrastructure, takes these issues into account now," Mrs Elson said.

"We will explore those issues with Land and Water, and in particular, the role that Land and Water plays in developing appropriate water management programs."

PUBLIC HEARING – 5pm, Wednesday 11 December 2002

WHO: Land & Water Australia appears at House Agriculture Committee water inquiry
WHERE: Committee Room 1R3, Parliament House, Canberra
WHEN: Wednesday 11 December 2002, 5.00pm

For **media comment**, please contact:

Kay Elson, House Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Committee Chair, on (02) 6277 4274

For **background information**, including the full terms of reference and copies of submissions, please contact the Committee secretariat on (02) 6277 4500 or visit the Inquiry website at

www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/primind/index.htm