

Secretary: *A. Deah*

- 4 APR 2003

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORT AND
REGIONAL SERVICES

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing this email as a private citizen and not as a NSW public servant. My main concern is that the inquiry into sustainable use of water is too focused on the situation west of the Great Dividing Range, though this is a very important issue. I would like to remind members of the inquiry of the large number of coastal wetlands in NSW that have been drained since European occupation and the inevitable impact on aquatic birdlife, fish stocks and availability of surface water this must have had.

I would like to see a program of rehabilitation for some of these wetlands, similar to the program currently underway in Sydney focused on filtering storm water and the quality of water entering rivers. A program such as this would assist NSW and Australia to meet its obligations under the wetlands conservation policy, international biodiversity conservation and RAMSAR Convention agreements.

A cursory look at remnant wetlands along the Pacific Hwy reveals many are on farm land producing low value crops such as sugar cane for stock feed. The presence of these crops suggests a secondary income to the land owner tying up large parts of coastal NSW for the purpose of tax minimisation.

Though the rehabilitation of these wetlands would not contribute to the objective of water quality/availability in the Murray Darling Basin it would have benefits to a large portion of Australia's population. I include in this:

- improved quality of life for residents by breaking up coastal strip development.
- a resource for tourism, both ecotourism and fishing.
- increased habitat for aquatic birdlife.
- increased surface water availability during periods of drought.
- filtration of water before entering the sea.

A program such as this would probably become unviable if left for too long as land prices will continue to rise, however I think it has much merit.

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