

Submission to the Standing Committee on Science and Innovation
Re: THE INQUIRY INTO THE COORDINATION OF THE SCIENCE TO
COMBAT THE NATION'S SALINITY PROBLEM.

From : Heather Ranclaud
Deputy Chair
Namoi Catchment Management Board

A large amount of research has been conducted in the Namoi Catchment and particularly the Liverpool Plains over the past decade, investigating salinity, hydrology and water use. Salinity has been identified as an issue with an associated Catchment Target and Management Actions in the Namoi Catchment Blueprint. The Board welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry.

a) use of the salinity science base and research data:

Vegetation Management-

The strong linkage between vegetation management and salinity is well established. Before investigations into costly engineering solutions are launched in the North West, we would like to see more incentives for conservation and management of existing/remaining native vegetation as a priority. This would have compound benefits in conserving biodiversity as well as reducing salt mobilisation. Revegetation targets have also been set so that strategic on ground works can reduce recharge in parts of the catchment.

b) linkages between research and implementation:

Some members of the Namoi CMB are concerned about the lack of integration between research and on ground action.

The Namoi Catchment Blueprint has identified and prioritised management actions as:

- Identify areas of dryland salinity hazard
- Identify major sources of point source salinity
- Establish within valley targets for river EC
- Monitor the catchment for trends in salinity discharge at a sub catchment level
- Identify priority Artesian bores requiring capping and piping for maximum salinity benefit
- Identify and promote suitable BMP's to reduce the mobilisation of salt in the soil profile

Various other management actions include community capacity building, awareness education and extension programs, as well as revegetation targets which will all contribute to improved and integrated catchment management.

The Namoi CMB appreciates that significant investment from both the public and private sector will be needed to implement the Blueprint.

c) adequacy of technical and scientific support in applying salinity management options:

The Namoi CMB is also aware of concerns raised that the focus of research in the Namoi catchment has been in the Liverpool Plains, and there is a need for more widespread research and on ground works in other parts of the catchment.

An example of raising awareness, has been the use of EMI surveys. When these machines were taken to Inverell several years ago, the extent of salinity issues was raised and many local landholders began on ground works and changed management to deal with the problems. It may still be the case that awareness and acknowledging the problem is the first step in changing management.

Many sub catchments in the Namoi do not have peizometers and those that do, lack on going monitoring.

If we could have ongoing support for landholder monitoring and installation of peizometers where landholders can commit to ongoing monitoring we may be able to gain more information about groundwater in a cost effective way.

Thankyou for considering this submission.

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6/11/03*