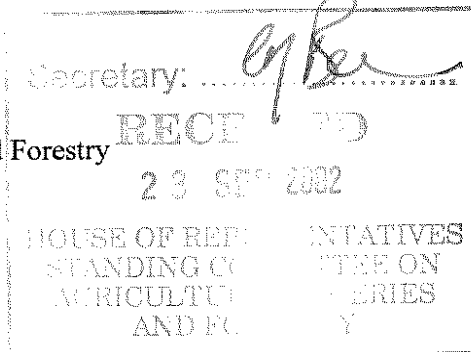




SUBMISSION NO. 74

**The Hon Wilson Tuckey MP**  
Minister for Regional Services, Territories and Local Government

Mrs Kay Elson MP  
Chairman  
Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600



10 SEP 2002

Dear Mrs Elson

**Ref: Inquiry into current and future water availability, focussing in particular on the role of the Commonwealth in ensuring adequate and sustainable supply of water in rural and regional Australia.**

As Minister for Regional Services water supply and usage is of great concern to my constituency.

Could I therefore request that your Committee seek advice upon the following issues?

Water Conservation within Cities and areas of high industrial usage. Water collection and treatment of stormwater and the recycling of industrial usage can deliver both environmental and economic benefits.

The City of West Torrens in Adelaide has commissioned a substantial consultancy on this subject and I would encourage your secretariat to request it as a submission.

Addressing the saline pollution of Dry Land Agriculture and our River Systems. Salinity as we know it is a water or hydraulic problem salt is the by product. Saline pollution can be addressed and both land and rivers regenerated by engineering interventions with the capacity to supply extra volumes of potable water at economically viable prices.

The best example of salt land regeneration is the extent to which the Dutch farm the seabed at substantial depths below sea level. This is achieved by pumping down the salt water below ground level (originally with windmills) and allowing rainfall to purify the surface land. This process is now practiced in my electorate including at Narembeen by digging 2-3m drainage channels (see ABC Landline Saturday 31 August 2002 ABC TV). It is also practiced in the South Australian Riverland by intercepting ancient and relatively deep paleo salt streams, which are the major source of riverine salinity not surface, run off associated with land clearing. Much of the catchment areas of our major river systems were not forested when the first graziers arrived. The South Australian Water Authority has a major facility pumping hundreds of tonnes of salt away from entering the river each day resulting in the section of the river so treated having no increase in the incidence of salt notwithstanding continuing irrigation in the vicinity.

Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600  
Tel: (02) 6277 7060  
Fax: (02) 6273 7112  
Email: MinRegion@dotars.gov.au



2002 Year of the Outback

**Perth:** 38<sup>th</sup> Fl "Exchange Plaza"  
2 The Esplanade Perth WA 6000  
(GPO Box B58 Perth WA 6838)  
Tel: (08) 9325 4077 Fax: (08) 9221 3325  
**Mid-West:** 23 Chapman Road  
Geraldton WA 6530  
(PO Box 1781 Geraldton WA 6530)  
Tel: (08) 9964 2195 Fax: (08) 9921 7990

In both cases, however, no attempt is made to desalinise this water and I enclose an AFFA paper and my reply to Minister Truss on this issue.

My reply also highlights the potential for water conservation arising from the piping of irrigation water and incorruptible metering systems.

Ground water resources are a more difficult issue but proper metering would deliver surprising results as would desalinisation.

Recent reports indicated that irrigators had bid the annual trading price of a mega litre of irrigation water from a typical \$90 to approximately \$250 which indicates the value of this commodity when in short supply and the economic viability of desalinisation technology. The economic benefit of utilising salty ground water is virtually double due to the increased productivity involved.

The West Australian Government ignores this opportunity when it speculates about desalinising seawater. The industrial use of salinised ground water particularly for cooling and consequently as a precursor to desalinisation is another issue.

Whilst recognising that cost can destroy enterprise it is nevertheless the best method of conservation but not as I inform Minister Truss if only to improve the bottom line of State Government Agencies. Charges for water can be set by the market as in the Murray Darling but where possible should be used to extend our water saving and producing infrastructure.

Above all I believe the development of technology for solar desalinisation should be given highest priority as after all it already provides our rainfall and unfortunately our salinised landscape as it surgically removes the good surface water from its dissolved salts.

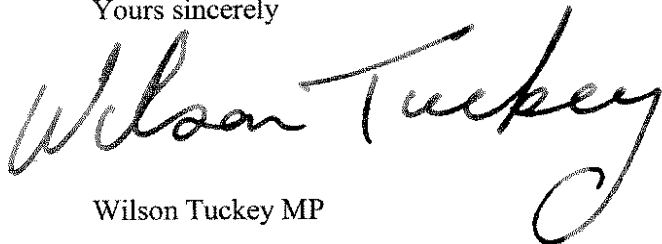
A major cause of reduced water supplies in our major dams is the current community desire to lock up forests and throw away the key. Trees are major consumers of fresh (not salt) water and evidence in Western Australian is that whilst catchment rainfall in recent years has fallen 25% run off is down 50%.

Typically reforestation of cleared land will reduce run off by 20%. Historically many pumping systems adjoining dams were powered by wood fired steam boilers, which is another practice that has ceased.

The Bureau of Rural Science has greatly enhanced the analysis process associated with Aerial Magnetic Survey and this technology can now accurately identify salt and fresh water bodies to considerable depths in the landscape. Dr David Dent should be a witness on this process. I enclose a small brochure.

Whilst the above lacks data, I would gladly discuss my views with your Committee should they desire.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wilson Tuckey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping flourish at the end of the name.

Wilson Tuckey MP