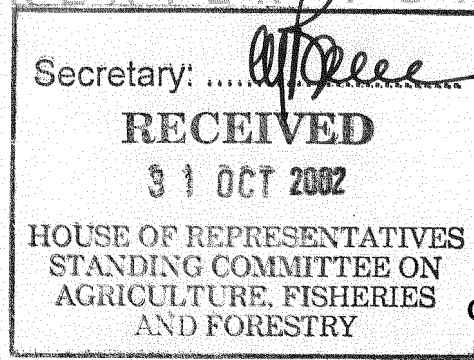




GREATER
SHEPPARTON

24 October 2002



CONFIRMATION OF EMAIL

24/10/02

The Secretary
Standing Committee on
Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry
Email: Primary.Industries.Reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

INQUIRY INTO FUTURE WATER SUPPLIES FOR AUSTRALIA'S INDUSTRIES AND COMMUNITIES

It is indeed timely that the above inquiry is being conducted as the Goulburn Valley region and indeed Australia enters its sixth year of extremely dry conditions.

The City Of Greater Shepparton is part of the Shepparton Irrigation Area, one of Australia's largest, and richest food production areas supporting a regional economy of \$8 billion annually.

- We are a national leading producer of stone fruit and dairy products and have Victoria's highest diversity of rural output. The dairy industry has grown at a rate of about 10% per annum for the last decade, and the horticultural industry is growing at about 4% per annum and in recent years over 1 million new fruit trees have been planted each year;
- The area has Australia's largest cannery – SPC-Ardmona and firms such as Tatura Milk Industries, Unifoods, Snowbrand, Campbell Soups and Bonlac all have major operations in the municipality;
- The above food processing enterprises have led to the development of a system of linked businesses that include transport, food processing and packaging, research, machinery, irrigation management, training, research and education.

Shepparton is situated on the banks of the Goulburn and Broken Rivers. The reliance on climate and water resources for intensive agriculture and horticulture are directly linked to the economic and social benefit of the region. Changes to the climatic conditions that affect the regions natural resource base have a direct impact on the community's well being.

It is the obvious changes to our rainfall patterns that are of extreme concern to us.

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The long term trend of decreased rainfall is a matter that we feel must be explored to the maximum and in this regard Council requests both Federal and State

Governments to show leadership as a matter of urgency in investigating ways of increasing water supply rather than accepting that the supply of water has to be taken as a "given" that we can do nothing about.

Council is aware of some of the excellent work being done in other countries in this regard and urges that immediate action be taken to investigate the potential for some of the activities undertaken there to be seriously trialled in Australia.

In this regard Council has become aware of the recent study trip to Texas that was undertaken by Mr John Forrest, Federal Member for Mallee and the report he has published which contains compelling evidence of what has been achieved in Texas that could well be replicated in Australia.

Mr Forrest has lodged his report to your Inquiry as part of his submission and we commend it to the Inquiry.

Council is of the opinion that a huge amount of money is being spent in managing our environment at the moment and that we need to now look towards the skies as part of this process as rainfall is the most crucial ingredient of our environment, economy and community welfare.

Action must be taken to include some of the successful overseas experiences in regard to harvesting the skies for rainfall as part of our environmental management practices.

Council looks forward to the Standing Committee putting forward positive recommendations to the Government in this regard.

Yours sincerely



Don McKenzie
CORPORATE MANAGER
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT