

Secretary: *af*

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THE HOMESTEAD  
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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES  
AND FORESTRY  
The Chairman & Members,  
House of Representatives Committee on  
Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry,  
Parliament House,  
CANBERRA.

A.C.T.

SUBMISSION NO. 86

SUBMISSION TO ENQUIRY INTO FUTURE WATER SUPPLIES  
FOR RURAL INDUSTRIES & COMMUNITIES.

BRISBANE RIVER VALLEY.

During the past decade and at present it is obvious that the water supplies for irrigation above Wivenhoe Dam are stressed to the limit; and also that additional water supplies will be required for the capital city of Brisbane in the future.

We do not appear to have learnt from the Cubby Station debacle in the Murray/Darling catchment as plans are afoot to develop a "Dairy World" at Colinton at the junction of Emu Creek (which rises outside Crows Nest on the Great Divide) and the upper Brisbane River. This development envisages a dairy herd of 7000 cows (each of which will require 20 gallons/day drinking water) plus irrigation in a 30" rainfall belt - obviously requiring vast additional water supply.

The Snowy Mountain Authority surveyed three dams on the upper Brisbane River - two on Emu Creek and Cooyar Creek (which rises in the Bunya Mountains) on areas comprising grazing land with no infrastructure of roads etc; and the third just below the junction of Cooyar Creek (which does not have a much larger catchment) but which would destroy roads, power and phone services to landholders engaged in cultivation and grazing activities.

If such a large development as the proposed "Dairy World" at Colinton is allowed to proceed, it is obvious that the developers should be required to construct a dam on either Emu Creek or Cooyar Creek sites to ensure adequate water supplies to the project which has other disadvantages including health risks to cattle penned in such an intensive scheme.

SOIL BIODIVERSITY.

Degradation of our land and water and biodiversity below and above the surface has occurred - not from the introduction of hard-footed animals - but from the way we have fenced them in and allowed them to weaken the original perennial grasses, the way we have destroyed trees indiscriminately, burnt plant residues above ground and used intensive tillage to disrupt the soil biology.

Components now absent from our degraded soils are high levels of soil organic matter, high levels of microbial activity and high soil carbon - not so obvious symptoms of soil and water deterioration as lack of groundcover, lack of desirable plants, lack of wildlife habitat or dryland salinity.

Part of the solution lies in changes in administration of the National Heritage Trust Funds and involvement of whole communities as outlined in the attached COMMENTS ON NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND ENVIRONMENT ARRANGEMENTS recently submitted to the Queensland Department of Natural Resources - but applicable Australia wide.

Part of the solution lies with changes in grazing management, changes in tree-thinning, changes in fire management and changes in tillage methods that can accommodate soil, vegetation, biodiversity and WATER QUANTITY AND WATER QUALITY improvements within economic production.

Healthy biota in our degraded soils - the base of the pyramid of life on earth - will ensure water infiltration to increase water storage and water flow in watercourses, decrease evaporation, wind and water erosion, enhance water quality, decrease carbon emissions and generally enhance quality of the environment.

I refer you to a W.W.F. Perspective outlined by C.E.O. Dr. David Butcher entitled "Life, Nature, Soils, Making the Connection" at the Conference on SUSTAINING OUR FUTURE THROUGH HEALTHY SOILS, HABITATS AND BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY CONFERENCE held on 6/4/2002. (Enclosed.)

The changes outlined in Paragraph 2 above will bring about the restoration of our living soils and in turn address a great deal of the sustainable future of water supplies in rural and regional Australia and thence to our urban coastal cities.

Enclosed are the following articles which would be of help in your deliberations:-

1. Submission on VEGETATION MANAGEMENT POLICY.
2. A ddress to Landcare Forum, December, 2001, by Dr. C.E.Jones, "REGENERATIVE LAND MANAGEMENT: A WHOLE OF LANDSCAPE APPROACH TO THE RESTORATION OF WATER BALANCE & WATER QUALITY."
3. Comments on REGIONAL NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT & ENVIRONMENT ARRANGEMENTS, together with a summary of Crows Nest Shire Council's innovative approach to Biodiversity Recovery in their Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (one of the few at present Councils adopting this worth-while approach to date).

Yours truly

(M<sup>rs.</sup>) V.D. BURNETT

TRUSTEE - ESTATE G.C. BURNETT (DECD.)

BENEFICIARY - WORLD WIDE FUND FOR NATURE (AUST.)