



# Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering

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Salinity Inquiry  
Submission No. 34.....

Thursday 16 October 2003

The Committee Secretary  
House of Representatives Standing Committee  
on Science and Innovation  
Suite R10116, Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Secretary

The Academy is grateful for the opportunity to make a submission to the *Inquiry into coordination of the science to combat the nation's salinity problem*, and our president, Dr John Zillman, has asked me to submit the following comments.

We have been involved over the last two months, together with the Australian Academy of Science, in a review of salinity mapping measures. The Academies have held a workshop, and on Friday 17 October will hold a public forum, to review a draft report prepared for the Government by consultants to the Operations Committee of the National Dryland Salinity Program. A final report from the Academies will be prepared immediately following the forum, and the proceedings of the forum will be published.

This activity has served to bring together one sub-set of the scientists and technologists who are contributing to Australia's salinity effort, but also to focus the attention of our Academy on broader aspects of the Australian effort to combat salinity. Two points stand out, and they form the basis of this submission.

In the first instance, in the field of salinity mapping, there is a disconnect between the research community in universities and Government agencies (Commonwealth, state and territory), and the private sector in which many companies are offering services in the market place and looking to make a living thereby. While this observation is made in respect of a particularly 'technical' aspect of the salinity program, there may well exist similar disjunctions in other specialist areas.

Secondly, there is not an efficient network for the dissemination of ideas and communication of results across a variety of scientific and technical fields. There is thus a great danger that individual efforts will proceed without consideration of side effects or with neglect of opportunities that could arise to develop combined approaches.

Both of these matters can be addressed if there is a central agency or bureau that can provide overviews and link together the many practitioners. Land and Water Australia is a possible location for such a function, but it is already compromised (in industry eyes) by being on the 'research' side of the divide. It might be that CSIRO, with its strong industry linkages, would provide a better location for this function, although it does seem outside the brief that one would normally view as appropriate to CSIRO. Whichever agency is asked to discharge this function, it is recommended that separate funding be provided to meet the cost of so doing.

Yours sincerely

(Professor) Ian D. Rae  
Technical Director

