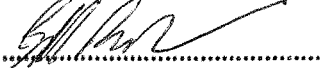


Submission No:	44
Date Received:	22-3-09
Secretary:	

19 March, 2009

Clerk Assistant (Committees)
House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

To Whom It May Concern,

RE: Role of Government in assisting Australian Farmers to adapt to the impacts of Climate Change Inquiry

The Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide a brief submission to the *Role of government in assisting Australian Farmer to adapt to the impacts of Climate Change Inquiry*.

The attached submission focuses on the Terms of Reference most relevant to the GBCMA. I look forward to the findings of the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely

W.J. O'Kane
Chief Executive Officer

The role of government in:

- a. Augmenting the shift towards farming practices which promotes resilience in the farm sector in the face of climate change**

Comment:

In order for farming sectors to become resilient in the face of climate change it must look at ways to diversify and absorb the shocks that Climate Change will enforce. Through diversifying the farming sector, in most situations it will be able to adjust and adapt the potential impacts of climate change, which in many cases are still unknown. Diversification can occur geographically at the enterprise and activity level as well as at the business structure level.

Government should accept and communicate that in some circumstances some farming sectors in some areas are not resilient and that ultimately a change will occur, the government will need to support these communities to work through the change and emerge as a more resilient enterprise.

The Government has an important role in helping communicate to farming sectors that Climate Change is something that farming enterprises must adapt to and there is and will continue to be a need for the change. The government can achieve this through empowering the farming communities through the transfer of information and devolving decision making.

Change will be managed locally, it includes communities, regional authorities and local government. Adaptation is not well suited to centralisation.

As identified below research, extension and training is the key to promoting resilience in the farming sector.

The GBCMA has implemented a number of programs and projects that are assisting the local community to adapt to climate change with the ultimate objective of creating resilient Catchment, some of these include:

- Whole Farm Planning
- Shepparton Irrigation Regions – Irrigation Futures Project
- DAFF Funded, GreenGraze project – focusing on the whole of farm management and management of native pasture to help in creating a diverse farming system.
- Biodiversity Action Planning – Engaging communities in catchment planning for biodiversity and how that interacts with farming systems.

All of these focus on providing information and empowering the community or individual landholder to think about climate change and how to create a resilient system. However a more coordinated approach is required.

b. Promoting research, extension and training which assists the farm sector to better adapt to climate change

Comment:

The government must ensure that the research, extension and training assist the farming community adapt to climate change through a systems approach (there must be improved understanding of the biophysical and socio-economic systems), ensuring that the information can itself be localised and importantly empowers the community to act.

The government has a role identifying what the likely shocks are, increasing the diversity options available and create an environment for their adoption.

The government has a role in research and devolving the information along with the decision making. It is ultimately the community that will create the resilient systems in the face of climate change, the government must undertake the relevant research and provide the best information possible to facilitate decision making. It must also support regional bodies in devolving information and making information locally relevant.