

Richmond Shire Council

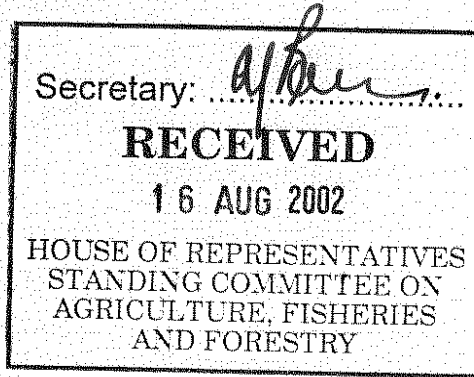
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Please address all
communications to
the Chief Executive Officer

Our Ref.:

Your Ref.: JS:JN:W:5688



13th August, 2002

House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries
And Forestry
Parliament House,
CANBERRA. ACT 2600


Dear Sir

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

Please find enclosed submission prepared on behalf of the Richmond Shire Council.

Should you have any queries in relation to the submission please contact the writer.

Yours faithfully


R.J. SCARCE
Chief Executive Officer

Enc:

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

*Author: R. John Scarce
Chief Executive Officer
Richmond Shire Council*

This submission will be brief and narrow only containing information and suggestions relevant to the Richmond Shire.

1. Off Stream Storages

The Flinders River is the fourth largest river in Queensland, discharging 4 million megalitres of water into the gulf annually. A hand full of irrigators draw from the Flinders an aggregate of 20,000 megalitres annually.

Richmond has been identified as one area where water meets the land. A prefeasibility study has been completed on a 192,000 megalitre storage on O'Connell Creek, with the potential of irrigating 10,000 ha at 85% reliability. Records indicate that at least 600,000 megalitres of water flow past Richmond annually with in excess of 1,000,000 megalitres flowing past Richmond most years. The O'Connell Creek Storage would draw approximately 75,000 megalitres annually from this flow.

10,000 ha of irrigated land along with the associated industries would double the population of Richmond in the short term, and with the availability of existing infrastructure (rail, road, Port of Karumba and Port of Townsville) Richmond will expand further.

The State Government is sitting on their hands. The Federal Government needs to develop guidelines and scientific analysis on rivers such as the Flinders (that have water in them 3 months a year with dry beds for 9 months of the year), in an effort to determine environmental needs, down stream fishing industry needs etc.

The beauty of the O'Connell Creek scheme is that Richmond is at the head waters of the Flinders River and less than 1 km from the proposed diversion weir wall on the Flinders the Stawell river flows into the water course, delivering more water into the Flinders at that point than that is contained in the Flinders prior to that point.

The Commonwealth needs to work with the State Government to formulate policies and legislation that make it easier, and stream line the process to develop these inland water storages.

The potential is also enormous for individual farmers with access to the river to invest in water harvesting infrastructure.

The access to water that we highlight whether, the O'Connell Creek scheme or individuals, has the ability to drought proof this country. Cattle feed lots and irrigated pastures have emerged in this area. Unfortunately these licenses were issued 6 years ago, while none are being issued now.

2. Great Artesian Basin

Further assistance to the States to ensure that every free flowing bore is capped. The wasted water from free flowing bores could be utilized more effectively for irrigation (examples aquaculture, tree farms, horticulture and small niche crops).

Our submission is based on the Richmond Shire, the Flinders River and the Great Artesian Basin. We are fortunate that the area is in the pioneering stage, with very little competing needs. This does not mean we can be forgotten. We have a chance to develop the country and develop it correctly recognizing past mistakes and not repeating them.

Everything you hear is negative to water development. Let's develop legislation and guidelines based on past information. Let's have the ability to do something wrong, rather than putting it in the too hard basket.

Any questions in relation to the above or further representations on any part raised can be directed to the author.