

SUBMISSION NO 25

CEO'S OFFICE
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DATE 29/08/02 INT. *MO*

When Contacting The Beaudesert Shire Community Advisory Panel please ask for
Mr Jim Dodds
Tel: 07 5540 5146
Ref: JD:cd
File Ref: 01/12/04/78

Beaudesert Shire
A region of many colours



Beaudesert Shire Community Advisory Panel

26 August, 2002

The Committee Secretary
House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Secretary: *W. B...*

RECEIVED

30 AUG 2002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES
AND FORESTRY

Faxed 29/8/02

Dear Sir,

Re: Submission – Water Resources

The Beaudesert Shire Community Advisory Panel (The Panel) is pleased to have the opportunity to submit to the enquiry.

The Panel is a community-based group, which brings together representatives from different sectors in the community to work together on matters, which will assist the Beaudesert region to develop, as well as enhance the lifestyle. State and Commonwealth Government Agencies active in the area also attend panel meetings. The principle purpose of The Panel is to provide advice to the three levels of Government on matters affecting the Community.

The matter of sustainable use of water and the long-term reliability of current supplies for the rural community has been a concern in the area for many years now. For this reason, The Panel has decided it is important that it make a submission to the enquiry as a community representative group. The Beaudesert Shire Community Advisory Panel, along with other Community Groups, is intending to submit to the enquiry and it is hoped that this submission will supplement these submissions and provide additional information from the perspective of rural water users.

As an overall principle, the panel would like to put forward the proposal that as rural users are drawing from the same water resource as urban users, they find themselves being positioned unequally in the financial equation. Indeed the urban water users because of higher priority for continued supply become "price setters", while the rural users become positioned as "price takers". In effect the high dependence of the urban users determines a high price, which is spread across a larger number of smaller volume users resulting in a smaller individual effect. The rural users by comparison must then meet the market price and have limited opportunities to defray that cost as their goods are priced in a broader, often global market.

The Panel would also like to submit the following observations that it has made in relation to the planning and management of water resources in regional and rural areas. These points are raised of equal importance and not listed in any priority order.

- The current method of assessing the provision of water infrastructure, e.g. the National Competition Policy and The C.O.A.G. Water reforms, effectively devalue the existing social infrastructure and social network of communities. It is believed that this process can result in making decisions, which will have significant impact in the overall sustainability of regional and rural Australia.
- The current policy directions would appear to have a disproportional focus on price penalties to achieve the desired outcome. The Panel believes that a more balanced approval, which gives more weight to an incentive system for research and investment, would be more beneficial and allow rural users to assist in achieving the outcome.
- A Federal Government incentive for the installation of rainwater tanks in domestic premises would assist to make better use of the available water resources across Australia. It is acknowledged that there may be some negative impact from such a policy, but these would only occur in the event of an over whelming participation in a single catchment.
- The Panel would also support further research particularly investigating:
 - The appropriateness of the applying current National Competition Policy method to such a resource, one that is important to the future sustainable development of regional and rural Australia.
 - Better forecasting capabilities to allow farming communities to make good decisions about which crops and when.
 - Water availability for rural Australia and any impacts of climate change.
- The provision of resource to allow the current draft of Planning Initiatives around water resources to be completed and implemented. The current approval process merely contributes to a lack of certainty and encourages some inefficient and inequitable water uses to continue.
- As water catchments do not recognize state or other electoral boundaries, the Commonwealth Government should fund the employment of officers to assist Communities to manage water resources on a catchments basis.
- There should be a review of the current policy direction, which prevents the use of existing natural water holding areas as off stream storage areas, as many would normally have been subject to flood prior to any stream regulation.

- It would also appear that throughout Australia, water storage infrastructure, which was originally requested by and supplied to service farmers, is having demand placed on it to provide a water supply to growing urban communities. These "allocations" to urban developments would appear to be at the expense of allocations to those farming areas.

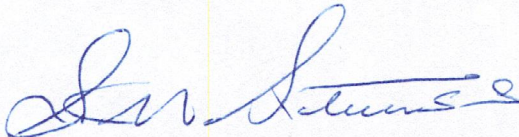
The Panel would also like to clarify to the Standing Committee that in the submission the term "urban" does include a component of industry, not just residential land uses, and these industries are also important in ensuring the sustainability of regional and rural Australia. They provide employment and supplement farm incomes as well as providing necessary services.

It should also be noted that by nature of some of the larger industries they are themselves significant users of water.

Should you wish to discuss this submission or enquire further on any of the points raised, please do not hesitate to contact Mr Jim Dodds on 07 5540 5146. The Panel would also like to reserve its right to make a submission in person to the enquiry.

In closing, I would like to reinforce that The Panel is a whole of community group with a significant component of rural and regional water users present. Again thank you for the opportunity to submit our views to you on this matter, which we believe is of utmost importance to the long-term sustainability of our region.

Yours faithfully,



Stephen Struss
CHAIRMAN WATER SUB-GROUP