



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

MEDIA ALERT

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Call for a national vision for water: Report of the Inquiry into Rural Water Supplies presented

Australia needs a comprehensive national vision for water which balances the needs of agriculture, the environment, and rural and urban communities according to a new report released today.

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry today presented its report on future water supplies for rural industries and communities titled *Getting water right(s) – the future of rural Australia*.

The report's 30 recommendations highlight the following key issues:

- The need for a comprehensive national vision for water which balances the needs of agriculture, the environment, and rural and urban communities;
- The need to urgently determine the sustainable level of use of Australia's major working rivers and aquifers;
- The need for a national research policy which prioritises and coordinates all research activities on water;
- The need for a ministerial portfolio with clear responsibility for the formulation and management of water policy at the federal level;
- The need for national investment schemes to improve water use efficiency by facilitating investment in water infrastructure, both on-farm and off-farm; and
- The need for a national policy on the recycling and reuse of stormwater and treated effluent, and the mandatory installation of rainwater tanks subject to suitable health codes being in place.

In releasing the report, the Agriculture Committee's Chair, Mrs Kay Elson MP said that the Committee wholeheartedly supports the thrust of the government's National Water Initiative which was announced last August. There is widespread agreement that Australia's water resources must be utilised on a sustainable basis, so that future generations can continue to benefit from that vital resource.

"Getting the agreement of all stakeholders on the right balance between the needs of water users and the needs of the environment for the long-term sustainability of water resources is the biggest challenge facing Australia's water managers", said Mrs Elson, "but I am confident that with goodwill and understanding the right decisions will be made".

The Committee believes that a fundamental issue is the need for secure, perpetual water rights for farmers, and that this must be a priority under the National Water Initiative.

For media comment, please contact:

Mrs Kay Elson MP, Chair, House Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Committee, on (07) 3807 6340

For background information, including the full terms of reference and copies of submissions, please contact the Committee secretariat on (02) 6277 4500 or visit the Inquiry website at www.apf.gov.au/house/committee/primind