



# Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering

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## **Inquiry into the extent and economic impact of salinity in the Australian environment**

The Academy is pleased to respond to the request from the Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and Arts References Committee for a submission to its inquiry into the long-term success of federal programs that seek to reduce the extent of the economic impact of salinity in the Australian environment.

Our interest in this matter follows specifically from the work we undertook in late 2003, in conjunction with the Australian Academy of Science, to assist in the review of salinity mapping methods. The focus of the review was a substantial Technical Report on salinity mapping methods and a User Guide to their application, which were compiled by Dr Brian Spies FTSE and Professor Peter Woodgate. Comments were provided to Dr Spies and Professor Woodgate by the steering committee established by the two Academies, and also at two workshops organised to draw out the views of, first, a selected group of practitioners, and secondly a wider professional audience.

It was evident during the review that a range of salinity mapping methods was available in Australia and that, in some cases, depended on very advanced technology. The Academy sees a need to continue to develop these technologies, and to further their application to salinity mapping and related national problems. Innovative scientists will need access to support for research and development, and potential users of the technology will likewise need support - at least in the early stages of application - if we are to get full benefit from the scientific and technological effort already expended in this work. In short, a lot has been achieved, but more is needed.

There is a significant need to broaden the community of users and staff of responsible agencies. They need assistance to develop skills of interpretation of the large data collections that exist and will continue to expand. At the instrumental end, this will need further development of information technology so that results can be accessed widely. At the user end, a training regime needs to be established if we are to get full benefit from the technological outcomes of mapping projects.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

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