

From: Robert Cordover
Sent: Tuesday, 3 May 2005 10:55 AM
To: ECITA, Committee (SEN)
Subject: assessment of salinity program

Dear Sirs

My friends and colleagues working with me to mitigate the economic effects of salinity assure me that the committee is only interested in submissions with an administrative focus and primarily in recommendations for improved policy and management of the national program.

Nevertheless, my intention here is only to provide some anecdotal evidence that at least one of the programs that provide grants to Landcare groups is giving farmers a chance for intensive cooperative participation in trying to find a solution to salinity degradation of once productive land. Most important, the government's salinity programs provide us with hope that solutions are possible.

The Donald and District (Victoria) Landcare group received a Natural Resources Innovation Grant last year to examine the productive use of saline ground water on degraded land by raising an internationally marketable seaweed, used primarily for food and as a source of industrial gels. The community has established four trial production basins and two evaporation basins for the saline water. Two bores have been drilled that are providing water to the basins and trials to grow seaweed in the basins have begun.

Perhaps by next summer the farmers in the Buloke Shire might have a new crop to farm on salt degraded paddocks. Local investors are already working with the Shire development office to consider establishing a seaweed processing plant at Donald if the trials are successful. We are working closely with the Victorian area consultative committee and North Central Catchment Management Authority and are building networks that will be able to address the salinity problems with the vigour brought about by cooperative efforts.

The Salinity program in one of its various forms has provided resources to give us hope that we can beat the salinity degradation of farmland and the loss of other rural assets and provides a chance for farmers, scientists and neighbours to work together to turn ideas into action that can at least mitigate the long term effects of salinity and at most develop saline groundwater as a productive resource.

Although this has not been a long-term project it does suggest the success of federal programs that seek to reduce the extent and economic impact of salinity in the Australian environment. Whether or not tangible success has yet been achieved, the program provides hope for success, opportunities to achieve that success and a

recognition that the government is participating to helping solve our problems with salinity.

Yours faithfully
Rob Cordover