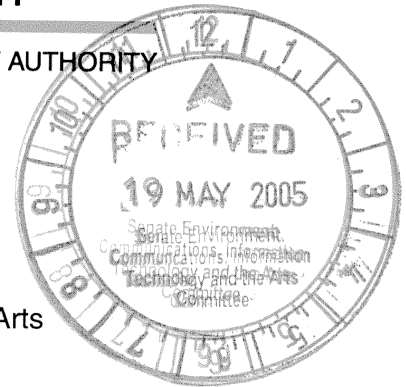


Hawkesbury-Nepean

CMA CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY



The Secretary
References Committee/Legislation Committee
Australian Senate
Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

HNCMA-05-0062

Dear Secretary

Inquiry Into The Extent And Economic Impact Of Salinity In The Australian Environment

The Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Authority (HNCMA) is pleased to make the following submission to the Inquiry into the extent and economic impact of salinity in the Australian Environment.

The key issues the Hawkesbury Nepean Catchment Management Authority wishes to raise are:

- All Catchment Management Authorities do not have equitable financial support to effectively manage salinity. The Hawkesbury-Nepean catchment, which includes Sydney's drinking water catchment and the rapidly expanding development of Western Sydney, is not designated as a National Action Plan priority area. This means the Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Authority has limited access to funding to address rural and urban salinity issues. While economic data now shows the potential costs of urban salinity, little emphasis is placed at a national level in addressing the issue.
- The HNCMA has in its Investment Strategy, Programs to resource catchment works in degraded rural areas through Soil and Land Programs. These Programs are tied to targets and standards that require on ground works, which do not allow investment in investigative work to explore closing of data gaps to enable beneficial on-ground investment. Scope to utilise this funding in urban areas is very narrow. With access to funding such as the NSW Salinity Strategy funding for the 2005-2006, 2006-2007, and 2007-2008 years, these outcomes may be progressed.
- The Australian Building Code has only in late 2004 issued a discussion paper related to building in saline environments and therefore does not currently provide effective legislative requirements for new homes. Building Codes place considerable emphasis on building or developing in types of environments. In this case a saline environment. Much of the understanding of saline environments has a heavy emphasis on agricultural terminology, when defining a saline environment. Urban salinity is triggered by different parameters than those impacting on agriculture. The lack of salinity specific data, particularly in the urbanising areas, in the Hawkesbury-Nepean catchment enables development to proceed in potentially saline hazardous areas without recognising the saline environment. National standards for the construction of roads do not address the issues of salinity impacts on roads, buildings and other major infrastructure. The

National Water Initiative does not directly consider the urban salinity hazard in programs for recycling and reuse of stormwater and grey water.

- Existing data gaps also exacerbate the impact of these financial and legislative issues. The national groundwater flow system information has not been extended to all catchments to show local and sub catchment variations in salinity processes. Even basic surface and groundwater quality and flow trend data is limited in some catchments, as is the case of the Hawkesbury-Nepean. This limits the ability for the HNCMA to target on ground works efficiently and effectively. These types of issues and the need to carry out investigations to fill data gaps are generally not allowed for in guidelines for funding and reporting.

Thank you for the opportunity to input into the Inquiry into the extent and economic impact of salinity in the Australian Environment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'John Klem', is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

John Klem
Chair
13 May 2005