



Ms. Louise Gell
Secretary
Environment Communications, Information Technology & the Arts
References/Legislation Committee
Australian Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600



11 August, 2005

Dear Ms. Gell,

**Re: Inquiry into the extent and economic impact
of salinity in the Australian Environment**

Further to your correspondence (26/7/05) seeking input on a number of questions relating to the abovementioned subject.

Please find briefly detailed below the CMA's response.

(a) Goals of National Programs

A number of successes have been achieved in the Namoi in dealing with salinity in recent times that are consistent with the goals of NAP, NHT and Landcare. These have resulted from the NSW Salinity Strategy, initiated by 'a whole of government' approach.

Highlights include:

Salt Teams - the Northern Salt Team comprised of staff from across DIPNR and NSW DPI achieved considerable NRM actions that address the key areas identified in the Strategy.

- Training of frontline staff (DIPNR/DPI) in salinity identification, processes and management.
- Expert advice for salinity management, including contribution to CMB Blueprints.
- Provision of technical information to the community and landholders through field days.
- Investigations – undertaking salinity investigation for individuals and landcare groups to prioritise and target on ground works. This included soil testing, piezometer installation, EMI investigations.
- Urban salinity advice, training and development of information material for local government through the Urban Salinity 1-11 series. Training for council staff in identification and management of salinity.
- Developing and maintaining networks with local grower groups, LPLMC, and Conservation Farmers Association.

- Private agronomist and agribusiness staff training facilitated by NSW DPI (Landmark Agronomists, Pursehouse, Elders).

Salinity Modelling – salinity models such as LUOS/CATSALT have been tested in a number of Namoi Catchments for use in prioritising investment decisions. The Groundwater Flow System model was developed for the Barwon Region and has been integrated into a number of modelling tools.

Environmental Services Scheme – this project explored the use of market based instruments, and tested tools for assessment of environmental outcomes. Two sites were established in the north, one in the Namoi, the other in the Gwydir. Both these sites had salinity with on ground works carried out to address this.

(b) **Role of Regional Catchment Management Authorities**

- There is an ongoing decline in ‘agency’ extension staff and access to salinity investigation information.
- Expensive monitoring and evaluation requirements are time consuming and are heavy resource users. CMA’s are small entities with limited resources.
- The current drought conditions have reduced the occurrence of salinity, particularly in terms of visibility and this would have some impact on our targets. But in reality there is a significant salinity/solicity problem across our catchment.
- Need to focus on developing regional partnerships particularly with agribusiness in order to achieve “on ground” change.
- A key role of CMA is to implement “on ground change” through investment. To this end Namoi CMA’s 3 yr Investment Strategy specifically targets both dryland salinity and water quality across the catchment.

(c) **Recommendations to assist Regional Managers and Landholders**

- A success in the past with Salt Action Teams has been the state level focus and the requirement to deliver state initiatives. This was successful as there was a network approach in sharing information and developing on ground programs.
- A state-wide focus for salinity activity where all CMA’s can contribute would be beneficial.
- As resources (\$ and people) are scarce it will be necessary to form partnerships and networks to extend salinity information, and/or recovery activities.

In concluding, I hope the information provided, despite its brevity, proves useful to the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely,



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Bruce Brown
General Manager
Namoi Catchment Management Authority