GOULBURN
BROKEN
CATCHMENT
MANAGEMENT
AUTHORITY

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29 SEP 2005
Committee, Information Technology and the Arts

15 September 2005

Ms Louise Gell
Secretary
Senate Committee for the Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ms Gell

RE: Inquiry into the extent and economic impact of salinity in the Australian environment.

Consistent with the State Government's Guidelines, the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority is not in a position to make a submission or give evidence to the inquiry.

However, we would like to make available the study on the South West Goulburn: "Tree Cover for Salinity Management" by SKM for your consideration. This document is in the public domain and will be placed on our website in the near future. I have also included a briefing paper I prepared for my Board.

I would also like to draw you to the Heartlands pilot which was conducted in the Honeysuckle Creek catchment. This pilot utilised airborne geophysics at a cost of around $1M. We were particularly disappointed with the pilot because it didn't advance our knowledge of the salinity problem materially. We are yet to receive any of the final results of the pilot and the attached questions remain unanswered. It appears from our experience, airborne geophysics has no place in the Murray Darling Basin, because it is a very expensive tool which has limited practical application.

Yours sincerely

W. J O'Kane
Chief Executive Officer

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Unanswered Questions

1. With the available knowledge from the aerial geophysics can we priortise the most appropriate areas to plant out vegetation the will have the best effect on water tables and salinity?

2. From the information what threat does the salt pose to the dryland areas and the streams?

3. Can we determine with accuracy where the fresh groundwater enters into the salt effected areas and the quantities. If so would it be advantageous to use this water prior to entering saline sumps etc?

4. With the aid of geophysics can we obtain a soil map of the area that is more detailed than present maps available?

5. Can we accurately determine where the salt stores are and what does this mean to the preparation of management plans?

6. Can a detailed map be produced of the geology and hydrology showing how it affects the water flow in salt stores and what we can do to help ease this problem?

7. My interests are not only at catchment scale but at paddock scale. Can the data be used to help landholders produce management plans that will assist with the lowering groundwater etc?

8. From a salinity perspective is it possible to indicate on overlays areas within the catchment that are not effected and do not link to effected areas. Therefore for these areas present land use options can continue without having a detrimental effect?

9. Can we determine if the salt is moving and at what rate is it moving?

10. Is there a difference between areas north and south of the freeway?

11. Have current plantings been effective and what impact have they had?

12. Is vegetation the only effective alternative or is ground water pumping an alternative?

13. With the aerial maps at different depths below the surface on a farm scale what does this all mean to the landholder and what information can we tell him with regard to salinity control?