

PolMin

Australian Political Ministry Network Ltd

Influencing public policy for the common good

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# ***FOR THE COMMON GOOD***

## SUBMISSION TO SENATE INQUIRY ON AUSFTA

AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL MINISTRY  
NETWORK  
(POLMIN)

APRIL 2004

## PolMin

Australian Political Ministry Network Ltd

**Influencing public policy for the common good**

To: Senate Select Committee on the US Free Trade Agreement,  
Parliament House,  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Subject: Water and the AUSFTA

### URGENT – US Free Trade Agreement – regarding WATER

As the National Coordinator of PolMin, an Australia wide membership organisation of religious congregations working for the Triple Bottom Line, plus spirituality in public decisions (i.e. For the Common Good),

We ask that the Senate Inquiry on the Free Trade Agreement with the US, consider, that this Agreement is jeopardising the management and protection of Australia's Water supplies.

PolMin is asking for improved regional management within a Federal water framework, improved cross border management and cross disciplinary management of this complex issue. (The OECD has stated that integrated coherence is necessary between International and national policy to reach the required level for sustainability management.)

We believe that this FTA will undermine the good and progressive intentions of the National Water Initiative (NWI). This Agreement risks driving developments in the NWI which would not be desirable for environmentalists, consumers of water, and farmers and irrigators alike. This agreement will not protect our natural resource, treating it as a corporate commodity rather than a natural resource for all to share.

We ask that the Senate Inquiry **not support** any legislative framework for the AUSFTA, as this agreement has not exclusively and explicitly excluded water (including drinking water, bulk irrigation

water and any other water-related services and infrastructure) from the Australian US Free Trade Agreement (AUSFTA).

Water and water-related services include: any water in its natural state (i.e. rivers, lakes, and groundwater), water collection, purification and distribution services and infrastructure, waste water, irrigation water, recycling/re-use treatment and distribution services and infrastructure.

PolMin therefore urges you not to support the development of this agreement because it has not excluded water. Water needs to be excluded for the following reasons:

1. Increased privatisation and commercialisation of water has serious social access and equity issues, and under the AUSFTA water would be subject to service and investment provisions of the Agreement;
2. Using the negative list and not excluding water will undermine the solid intentions of the National Water Initiative. The consultation phase of the NWI and the Senate Inquiry into Rural Water Industries and Communities are still continuing. If the FTA Senate Inquiry supports legislative requirements and allows the FTA to go ahead, this Agreement may affect the strength and implementation of the NWI. The NWI is electorally significant and the AUSFTA would compromise and cloud the Australian collaborative process between State and Federal governments. We need to get our internal act together on water and not have international water markets influencing our vital resource management at this time. It is not in Australia's best interest.
3. Australian Governments at all levels must maintain their ability to manage its scarce water resources. Without the explicit exclusion it may jeopardise the success of the National Water Initiative and its honorable intentions; and finally
4. We cannot expose Australian water regulators and service providers to the financial uncertainty that the AUSFTA may expose them, given uncontrolled corporate influence following the implementation and final signing off on the Agreement.

Therefore if water cannot be protected by this agreement then this Agreement should not be facilitated by the Australian Parliament.

As representatives of the Australian people and given the local risks, i.e. environmental, social, economic and spiritual, associated with water, we urge you to ensure water remains a resource to share... and not a commodity for market gain. We support you to ensure water is protected and excluded from this Agreement (AUSFTA), and as this is not the case, then the Agreement and supportive legislative changes should not go ahead.

As this is not the case and water has not been excluded from the Agreement, we ask that the legislative changes to support this agreement should not go ahead.

In addition, I have attached for you information, recent PolMin media releases on this issue, which was covered in all major Catholic press and our organisations Federal Election Strategy 2004, where water is one of our primary objectives.

Yours sincerely

Victoria Kearney,

**MPH, (PhD Community Development and Public Policy)**

**National Coordinator**

**Australian Political Ministry Network**

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## NOTE: ABOUT the Author

By way of seeking credibility and recognition of the above confident recommendation, as an individual I have had a long career as an integrative planner at a State and local government level, and in more recent times I have been working as a lobbyist working on Water issues since the last Federal election.....particularly in National Party electorates in at least 4 States. I also have had a political and academic career and therefore understand the implications of this Agreement at a community development and electorate level, particularly for the National Party in regional Australia and the Green vote within the urban environment.

### List of attachments:

Recent media release August 2003: National Water Initiative

Recent Media release Dec 2003: NWI and the AUSFTA

PolMin's Federal Election Strategy 2004

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## MEDIA RELEASE

27<sup>th</sup> August 2003

W 2003/11

### Independent Catholic lobbyist supports National Water Plan

As part of its national Australia's Waters lobbying campaign the Australian Political Ministry Network (PolMin), Victoria Kearney, supports the Federal initiative yesterday for investment in a National Water Plan. In saying this **Ms Kearney warned that there is a strong need to get the planning principles of the National Water Plan right to protect communities and our agricultural heritage against inequity of access to water and ensure knowledge and responsibility for social change. Both our rural and urban communities have a symbiotic relationship with our water supplies and healthy rivers mean healthy food industries for all Australians.**

Ms Kearney congratulated the Federal government's proposal to end the cross border deadlock on water issues across Australia. Victoria acknowledged the commitment of Deputy Prime Minister, Mr John Anderson and NSW Natural Resources Minister Craig Knowles on their joint leadership and politically bi-partisan approach on this most important issue.

Ms Kearney said that "water is a national issue of significance, and PolMin support's the need for a federal policy framework."

The Federal Government in presenting a proposal to the CAOG meeting of Australian Premiers this Friday 29th August, 2003. The proposal being put to the State leaders is for the adoption of a national strategy for water management.

Victoria Kearney stated that "integrated water management in this country has been stalled for too long because of the lack of real community participation and responsibility in decision making and the ongoing bureaucratisation and political resistance to effective cross border management."

Ms Kearney stated that "water is a complex issue which requires agreement and understanding of some basic values: water is not a commodity but a resource gift for all to share and good public policy requires support and community responsibility for social change and participation in important decisions.

PolMin would support a national water plan that: ensures a balance between market and regulatory mechanisms which protect all equally, regional development investment which supports social change adjustment rather than untied compensation, cross portfolio planning which encourages commodity research and investment in sustainable agriculture, legislative change that protects the autonomy of local government but requires cross border planning controls which ensure integrated catchment management and bioregional planning. Ms Kearney said that "there is much work still to be done but this is a way forward to protect the Murray Darling and recognise water as a National issue."

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

30<sup>th</sup> November 2003

### **National Water Plan at risk if water is not excluded from AUSFTA**

#### **Water needs to be excluded from Free Trade Agreement**

PolMin calls on Australian negotiations and Federal Cabinet on the US Free Trade Agreement to ensure water our scarce resource is explicitly excluded from Trade negotiations. Water needs to be excluded so as not to jeopardize the recent policy breakthrough on the National Water Plan. With increased risk of corporatisation this plan would be severely undermined.

As the negotiations get underway in Washington tomorrow 1<sup>st</sup> December 2003 on the Australian and US free Trade Agreement, independent Catholic lobbyist, Australian Political Ministry Network (PolMin), appealed to Minister Mark Vaile, Trade Minister, as a Catholic, to uphold Catholic social teaching for the common good.

Ms Kearney said that as the Agreement is using the negative list, by not excluding water the solid intentions of the National Water Initiative that will not have been negotiated and signed until after the signing of the AUSFTA, will be severely threatened.

PolMin urges the exclusion of water, as increased privatisation and commercialisation of water has serious social access and equity issues. Under the AUSFTA water would be subject to service and investment provisions of the Agreement. "This would be in contradiction to the Catholic Social teaching principle of the protection of the common good" Ms Kearney said today.

Australian Governments at all levels must maintain their ability to manage its scarce water resources. Without the explicit exclusion it may jeopardise the success of the National Water Initiative and its honorable intentions.

PolMin asks that Mr. Vaille and Cabinet ensure that water (including drinking water, bulk irrigation water and any other water-related services and infrastructure is explicitly excluded) from the Australian US Free Trade Agreement (AUSFTA).

“Water is resource to share and not a market driven commodity by which to gain profit” Victoria Kearney stated.

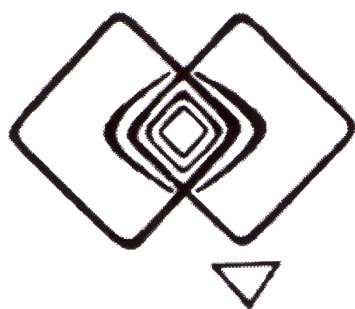
Water and water-related services includes any water in its natural state (i.e. rivers, lakes, and groundwater), water collection, purification and distribution services and infrastructure, waste water, irrigation water, recycling/re-use treatment and distribution services and infrastructure.

We cannot expose Australian water regulators,users and service providers to the financial uncertainty that the AUSFTA may expose them, given uncontrolled corporate influence following the signing of the Agreement.

PolMin calls on the Federal Cabinet and the Deputy Prime Minister to uphold the Catholic Social Teaching of the common good ,and to respect all water as a gift of creation, which need to be respected and protected for all species which rely on it for survival.”, Ms Victoria Kearney, PolMin’s spokesperson said today.

The Australian Political Ministry Network Ltd (PolMin) is a national independent not-for-profit [membership](#) organisation committed to bringing about systemic change in Australian society through the influencing of public policy for the common good in accordance with the principles of Catholic social teaching.For further information contact: Victoria Kearney, Coordinator, Phone: (02)9890 2852, mobile: 0425267490, email: [media@polmin.com.au](mailto:media@polmin.com.au) [www.polmin.com.au](http://www.polmin.com.au)





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## ***FOR THE COMMON GOOD***

AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL MINISTRY NETWORK  
(POLMIN)

**2004 FEDERAL ELECTION POLICY AGENDA**

**FEBRUARY 2004**

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Australian Political Ministry Network Ltd  
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# Introduction

Established in 2000, Australian Political Ministry Network Ltd (PolMin) is an independent, national not-for-profit membership organisation committed to bringing about systemic change in Australian society through influencing public policy in accordance with the principles of Catholic Social Teaching. The policies of interest to PolMin are those that trap people in social, economic, political and environmental disadvantage undermining their dignity as human persons. PolMin's members provide the networks necessary for systemic change at the local level. PolMin provides its members with the policy analysis and development and education regarding the public policy processes which promote effective lobbying necessary to influence public policy for the common good.

PolMin engages in the policy process because Catholic social teaching states that it is both the right and duty of all persons of good will to participate in public policy process. It is through participation that we are able to educate policy makers as to the policies that protect the dignity of the human person and promote the common good:

*This right to take part in government opens out to all a new and extensive field of opportunity for service. A situation is created in which civic authorities can, from the greater frequency of their contacts and discussions with the citizens, gain a clearer idea of what policies are in fact effectual for the common good; and in a system which allows for a regular succession of public officials, the authority of these officials, far from growing old and feeble, takes on a new vitality in keeping with the progressive development of human society [John XXIII, Encyclical letter on establishing universal peace in truth, justice, charity, and liberty, *Pacem in Terris*, 11 April 1963, 74].*

Since its establishment PolMin has actively worked to influence Australia's policies regarding asylum seekers, higher education, the United Nations and water. As a Federal Election will be held sometime in 2004, PolMin produced this booklet to outline its policy agenda for the 2004 Federal Election. PolMin's policy agenda for the 2004 Federal Election is focused on eight key policy reforms that address specific systemic disadvantages. PolMin will lobby all political parties and candidates in the lead-up to the Federal Election urging them to make a public commitment to PolMin's reform agenda.

# Asylum Seeker Policy

## A new immigration policy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century

### Principle

“It is the duty of legislators to ensure laws realise and serve the common good.” [Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter on Capital and Labor, *Rerum Novarum*, 15 May 1891, 32]

### Issue

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 1958 the then Commonwealth Minister for Immigration, Mr. Downer, introduced the *Migration Bill* later to become the *Migration Act 1958*, replacing the discriminatory *Immigration Act 1901*. Mr. Downer concluded: “I am sure that nothing but good will come of this innovation which, together with other ameliorating effects of this legislation, will place Australia in advance of any other country”.

Today, some 46 years later, the *Migration Act* remains in force but the social landscape is fundamentally different. In 1958 the *Migration Act* consisted of 67 clauses designed to address the needs of its day, now, some 46 years later, the *Act* has been amended 110 times and has grown into 738 clauses. When the *Act* was first enacted it did not envisage “asylum seekers”, asylum seekers are now at the center of Australia’s migration policy.

The *Migration Act* served the immigration needs of the Australian community in 1958; it does not serve the immigration needs of the Australian community of 2004.

### Action

PolMin requests all political parties to commit to having the new 42<sup>nd</sup> Federal Parliament undertake a complete review of the *Migration Act and its associated regulations and* through wide community consultation develop a policy that reflects the attitudes and needs of the Australian community. This policy is to be presented to Federal Parliament for debate and enactment in February 2006.

# Asylum Seeker Policy

## Restoring the right of entry

### Principle

“It is an inalienable right of a person to enter a country to seek asylum”. [John XXII, Encyclical Letter on Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty, *Pacem in Terris*, 11 April 1963]

### Issue

The *Migration Act 1958* gives the right to any asylum seeker to claim asylum from the Australian Government upon entering Australia’s migration zone. In October 2001 Federal Parliament responded to the *MV Tampa* incident by enacting the *Migration Amendment (Excision from Migration Zone) Act 2001* abolishing this right as it applied to Christmas Island, Ashmore Reef, Cartier Islands and Cocos (Keeling) Islands to the north of Australia. The purpose of this *Act* was to prevent asylum seekers entering Australia’s migration zone at these points from claiming asylum.

To strengthen the *Act*’s objective Federal Parliament also enacted, at the same time, the *Migration Amendment (Excision from Migration Zone) (Consequential Provisions) Act 2001* which barred any asylum seeker from challenging the *Act* in the courts. The “7-day” rule was introduced, the effect of which is to deny an asylum seeker the right to claim asylum in Australia if they stayed 7 or more days in another country but had not claimed asylum in that country. As many asylum seekers stop off in Indonesia for more than 7 days on their way to Australia, Parliament wanted them to claim asylum in Indonesia and not in Australia.

### Action

PolMin requests all political parties to commit to having the new 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament enact in its first session legislation repealing the *Migration Amendment (Excision from Migration Zone) Act 2001* and *Migration Amendment (Excision from Migration Zone) (Consequential Provisions) Act 2001* thereby restoring the right of all asylum seekers to enter Australia and claim asylum from the Australian Government.

# Higher Education Policy

## Equitable access to higher education

### Principle

It is the right of every Australian to access to higher education because “it is through higher education that a person can develop his or her skills enabling him or her to participate fully in society.” [John Paul II, Encyclical Letter on the Ninetieth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum, *Laborem Exercens*, 14 September 1981]

### Issue

Dr Brendan Nelson stated in 2002 “Our priorities are to see that we have equity, that we have increased access for low income Australians who might not currently be getting access to universities.” (31st October 2002 ABC Online). The recent changes to Higher Education in Australia will result in an under funding of Universities which will have a major impact on those University campus’ in social and economically disadvantaged communities, like Western Sydney and rural Australia.

Australia's Higher Education policy is set out in the recently enacted *Higher Education Support Act 2003*. The *Act* denies the right of every Australian to access higher education because it actively discriminates against those Australians who are: financially disadvantaged, older, in full-time employment or women with young children. The re-structuring of Higher Education through this Act has facilitated the further privatisation of higher education and the deregulation of the sector.

The re structuring of higher education whilst winning some concessions has in exchange undermined the needs of students, particularly those from disadvantaged communities and regional areas, in favour of outcomes for the hierarchy of the Universities and government. This will result in fewer places and resources for marginalised Universities and apply more pressure on these Universities to increase fees. Low incomes families will be discouraged from considering University as an option because the HECS debt will be too much of a long term economic threat.

# Higher Education Policy

## Equitable access to higher education

**Action:** PolMin will ask all political parties to commit to having the new 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament amend the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* to make access to higher education more equitable for students in socially and economically disadvantaged communities. This does not mean that higher education will be free and up front fees and HECS charges abolished.

PolMin will require amendment of the Act to ensure:

- A maintenance component of free access to higher education in at some universities in disadvantaged communities,
- Increased support funding per student at these Universities to allow levels of access to be increased or maintained for all higher education courses,
- Scholarships for rural students to become more widely available and increased to a living level.

PolMin asks that, in order to ensure equal access to fairer higher education, the Higher Education Support Bill be amended to allow for regulation of HECS fee increases, maintenance of a standard level for non fee paying students and levels of upfront fee paying and the repayment threshold be in keeping with average annual earning levels.

# United Nations Policy

## Incorporating international obligations

### Principle

The principle of solidarity states that we all belong to the common community of human kind [Paul VI, Encyclical Letter on the Development of Peoples, *Populorum Progressio*, 26 March 1967]

### Issue

At present there exists no policy mechanism allowing Federal Parliament to incorporate Australia's international obligations set down by the United Nations into Australia's domestic policies. Any decision to incorporate an international obligation rests solely with the Federal Executive. The Federal Executive is made up of the Federal Cabinet and the Governor-General.

Due to this policy deficiency Federal Parliament must wait until Cabinet decides that it wants Australia to comply with an international obligation. Currently in Australia there appear to be inconsistencies in our compliance with International and United Nations treaties and agreements. There are also inconsistencies in relation to our support for the United Nations as international peace enhancing body. This inconsistent commitment requires debate and further development.

### Action

PolMin urges all political parties to commit to having the new 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament enact legislation in the first session enabling any member of Parliament to introduce a Bill incorporating international obligations into Australia's domestic policies. This Bill would have precedence over all other matters.

PolMin asks that the need to increase civil participation in debate on UN treaties and decisions be included in this Bill and that the government ensure that the Senate Committee on the United Nations be reconvened to consider the role, responsibilities and requirements of the United Nations and Australia's International Law.

# United Nations Policy

## Complying with international obligations

### Principle

International obligations seek to promote and protect the international common good. It is the duty of government to promote and protect the common good. That is the primary reason for its existence. [John XXIII, Encyclical Letter on Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty, *Pacem in Terris*, 11 April 1963]

### Issue

Although the Federal Parliament does, from time to time, incorporate into Australia's domestic policies international obligations set down by the United Nations, there exists no policy mechanism to monitor whether these international obligations are complied with. It is assumed that once they are incorporated they are acted on in the letter and in the spirit.

Without a mechanism to assure the public that Australia is complying with its international obligations and upholding the international common good there is no way of knowing whether the Federal Parliament is performing its duty of promoting and protecting the common good.

### Action

PolMin requests all political parties to commit to having the new 42<sup>nd</sup> Federal Parliament enact legislation within the first session of Parliament that would create an independent Office of International Obligations reporting directly to Parliament and charged with the responsibility of monitoring the compliance of Australia with its international obligations. The Office would also be charged with the responsibility of advising Federal Parliament on the effectiveness of existing legislation and advising Parliament how new international obligations could be incorporated into Australia's domestic policies. The Office would report to the Parliament through the Prime Minister. PolMin also asks that one of the responsibilities of this Office would be to encourage a greater role for women in the UN and their contribution at the Peace Table, given the contribution that feminine insight makes to positive and authentic human relations ([www.cathnews.com/news/403/58.php](http://www.cathnews.com/news/403/58.php))



# Water Policy

## Why Water?

**Principle:** In a recent speech to the Fraternity Campaign 2004, Pope John Paul II called water a "gift of God" and a "right of all". The Holy Father was insisting that it is "necessary to pay attention to problems that derive from its evident scarcity in many parts of the world". In his message, the Pope said that water is not an unlimited resource. "Its rational and solidaristic use calls for the collaboration of all people of good will with the proper governmental authorities to effectively protect the environment, considered as a gift of God." "Therefore, it is a question that must be resolved by establishing moral criteria necessarily based on the value of life and respect for the rights and the dignity of all human beings."([www.cathnews.com/news/403/34.php](http://www.cathnews.com/news/403/34.php))

The Australian Political Ministry Network emphasizes two principles of Catholic Social Teaching to support its involvement in water issues: [upholding the common good](#) and [solidarity](#). PolMin's members are deeply concerned as water is a resource for all and they stand in solidarity with those who live in rural and regional communities such as the Murray-Darling Basin and Western Sydney where water issues are impacting on those who are most at risk and disadvantaged.

Considering the [common good](#) requires us to encourage public decisions that will protect the gifts of creation including all species (including humans) that rely on water enabling them to survive in their natural environment.

**Common Good:** We all rely on water - it is the source of all living things. Farmers, business people, city dwellers, those living in rural and regional areas, plants, animals and birds, indigenous Australians - all require water to survive. We need to protect water for all. Our policies need to recognise this underlying principle. We need to develop a position that recognizes that our values are shared, although our position on water may be different. If water and its management are not based on a cooperative consciousness, then we all will be affected. We need to let our differences blend and value the common good and future. We all need to participate in public decisions that ensure this takes place.

# Water Policy

## Cross Boundary Management - National Water Plan

**Issue:** Rivers and other natural flows of water do not stop at state or local government boundaries or property boundaries. We need to work towards the development of cross boundary policies. Water requires policies that are developed across state borders and transcend disciplines of work e.g. science, economics and the environment. The Federal government needs to be committed to developing process and practice that supports this.

Cross boundary issues, such as determining State/Commonwealth responsibilities often cause political conflict rather than facilitate effective and efficient implementation of policy change and action. The current solution to such issues is the development of Commonwealth/State Intergovernmental Agreements. These are based on mutual responsibility and are cooperative, non-regulated agreements. This is to be applauded given current constraints and clear lines of Commonwealth/ States powers. However, this policy solution for complex issues has become, in itself, a source of conflict, particularly over cost and funding issues between States and the Commonwealth. (e.g. Commonwealth State Housing Agreement).

PolMin would, in the first instance, support the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Water Initiative as a good first step. However, PolMin would encourage further legislative reform, to avoid undermining the Agreement and funding pitfalls and cost shifting politics.

**Action:** PolMin supports the following policy actions:

- Improved cross boundary management across local and state boundaries
- Support of a Federal Government committed to the National Water Initiative
- Ongoing implementation of integrated catchment management and the National Water Quality and Salinity Action Plan.
- Increased role and action of the Natural Resource Ministerial Council, which encourages improved cross portfolio management and protection of the Murray-Darling Basin.
- Review of the Biodiversity Act 1999 as a possible Federal legislative umbrella to establish regulated bilateral agreements for 'water as a national issue of significance'.
- Review of the Urban Development Act to improve regional planning guidelines at a Federal level. This legislation needs to provide regional planning guidelines which reflect the interrelationship between the physical and human environments i.e. Federal policy that requires state and local governments to take a stronger regional view to improve cross boundary planning, protect at risk communities and ensure cross portfolio planning between water, food production, trade, health and other sustainability issues.

# Water Policy

## Water and Salinity

### Urban Water Use and Re Use

#### Issue:

The management of our urban water, stormwater and its reuse and in particular our drinking water is fast becoming a major regional issue for many cities including Sydney and in particular Western Sydney. PolMin is concerned about the justice issues regarding the basic human right to a healthy clean living environment for all. As the result of the salinity, land and water management issues, those living in Western Sydney are at a distinct disadvantage economically, socially and environmentally.

Despite there being no shortage of information on salinity at a government level, PolMin is concerned and questions why the level of community consciousness remains particularly low and largely unaware of the significant impact, environmentally, socially and economically of water and salinity issues in our community? In addition, there are many planning and policy documents and strategies in place but the implementation of these is very slow.

PolMin continues to lobby for improved implementation of National and State strategic plans and investigates ways to overcome barriers and obstacles currently stalling action. In regard to the salinity issue it is less that there is need for policy reform and more that there is a need for increased cooperation and incentive to implement policy and plans already adopted by government.

At a **Federal level** there is the [National Water Quality and Salinity Action Plan](#) - a planning framework at the National level. As a result of this document the Dry Land Salinity Program has been established. This program sets out targets and actions across Australia.

At Federal level Urban Development there is legislation setting out issues of regional development requiring urgent review. There is no single piece of legislation that addresses urban and regional sustainable development issues in an integrated way. The Biodiversity Act is still restricted in its ability when addressing cross boundary issues such as water and land management.

# Water Policy

PolMin does not believe that intergovernmental agreements are sufficiently strong to last beyond electoral periods and are easily changed by corporate pressure and successive governments. These agreements are based on mutual obligation and easily undermined if good faith changes. *It is unclear whether we can actually reverse current land and water salinity problems, but we may be able to prevent the spread and reduce the impact of current salinity. The issues particularly affecting salinity management in western Sydney are a) Catchment management b) Land clearing c) Urban development d) Stormwater management and e) Maintenance and care of remnant urban bushland*

Water sensitive urban design is extremely important in development and building industries and in the management of stormwater. As new developments are proposed either it is very important that approval is only given to development that is sensitive to the protection of the catchment and committed to reducing the risk of salinity in the management of water, the protection of vegetation, and the design of the development. The development of the Australian Defence Industry site (ADI) in Western Sydney is particularly important given the proposed large scale of the development and the projected loss of remnant urban bushland.

## Action:

PolMin asks that a new Federal parliament:

1. Review the Urban Development legislation to improve regional planning guidelines at a Federal level to improve the management of sustainability issues across Australia. This legislation requires:
  - Improved cross boundary planning at State and local government levels.
  - All cities to have regional urban planning frameworks that are regularly updated. (Sydney currently does not have Strategic Urban plan for the region.)
  - Water sensitive urban design implemented through regulation and market incentives
  - Improved integrated local government planning and catchment management planning.
  - Improved cross portfolio planning in relation to urban development and natural resource management.
2. Will include effective water and land management strategies in the development of the ADI site.
3. Will implement the Development of National Water Initiative, in the first instance, followed by a review of the Biodiversity Act 1999 as a mechanism to improve water management at a National level.

# Water Policy

## Water and Privatisation

### Access and Equity to Water

#### Issue:

Water needs to be seen as a natural resource to be shared, not a commodity for profit. Water needs to be excluded from threats of privatisation e.g. National Competition Policy and any trade agreements.

**Water as Natural Resource is not a commodity for profit:** When a resource is vulnerable there is increasing pressure to put a high price on it. There is increasing pressure to privatise water and let a market driven approach decide how much it is worth and who can afford to buy it. It is driven by a belief that if you pay for something it will be of more value. Water is not valued for its monetary value but from what it provides in sustaining life. Australians need to be aware of the pressure to privatise drinking and irrigation water and the impact of trade negotiations on local small business that provide the infrastructure to supply and manage water in Australia.

Water needs to be traded and supplied to our agricultural industry in a fair and equitable way. Federal guidelines are needed to manage this process. But these guidelines should not be subject to market mechanisms alone. These allocations need to be regulated: to provide equitable access to water for small farming business, to protect the water supply and to encourage the sustained economic, social and cultural growth of Australian rural and regional communities. Food production and water use are issues for urban and regional Australians alike.

The privatisation of drinking water and water related services including any water in its natural state (i.e. rivers, lakes, and groundwater); water collection, purification and distribution services and infrastructure, waste water, irrigation water, recycling /reuse treatment, distribution services and infrastructure are also important concerns.

# Water Policy

Any future Trade Agreements need to exclude water for the following reasons:

- a. Increased privatisation and commercialisation of water has serious social access and equity issues and under any FTA water would be subject to the service and investment provisions of these Agreements,
- b. Using the negative list within these Agreements and not specifically excluding water may undermine the positive intentions of the National Water Initiative,
- c. Australian Governments at all levels must maintain their ability to manage scarce water resources. Without the explicit exclusion of water from free trade agreements the success of the National Water Initiative will be jeopardised.
- d. Australian water regulators and service providers cannot be exposed to the financial uncertainty of a FTA given the uncontrolled corporate influence which follows the signing of such Agreements.

## Action

PolMin asks the new Federal Parliament to:

Explicitly exclude water, including drinking water, bulk irrigation water and any other water related services and infrastructure, from the any Free Trade Agreements.

Review the National Competition Policy with a view to excluding water and water related services from the impact of this policy.

Adopt a position that sees '**water as a natural resource of significance to be shared and not a commodity for profit**' to be reflected in all future public policy decisions.