

Talawanta,  
BREWARRINA. 2839.  
30<sup>th</sup> November, 29-11-2005

The Secretary  
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

RE: Submission to the “Inquiry into Water Policy Initiatives” on behalf of Maurice Francis (Bill) Hagarty and Wilhelmina Ann Hagarty who are Western Lands Lease holders on the Birrie river.

- We have lived on our property “Talawanta” on the Birrie river since 1/7/1959 – reared and educated 4 children to Higher school Certificate Standard at Private Schools and had 2 sons complete University degrees. I was reared on the Culgoa river and therefore have a very long association with the river system. We bought an adjoining property in 1969 and this has enabled us to achieve our goals. During the last few years (Since water harvesting came to be in Qld) we have seen the system degenerate through over allocation of water in that state to a point where
- Our river is in a sorry state silting up through lack of flushing flows
- We have not had a flow past our house for 18 months despite the fact that two events in excess of 50000ml have passed through St.George. We would love to exchange our ODEROUS house supply for some recycled or desalinated water.
- Fish are non existence.
- The trees in the riverine environment are dead or dying as are those in the riparian zone and now the decimation is spreading to the floodplain. Lignum is fading away leaving no habitat where it used to be plentiful
- Wildlife is fast disappearing even the birds are leaving.
- The whole environment is undergoing a dramatic degrading.
- Stocking rates are falling .
- Property values are falling.
- Young people can see that the future is unsure and are leaving.
- Older people are being left to carry on but having witnessed the decimation of their life’s work and love they are losing their will to continue.
- Try to sell out and retire . We did but could not get a reasonable price although the asking price was heavily discounted due to the water problem. Prospective buyers were asking what was happening with the rivers. Elders property specialist Noel Lennon from Nyngan has just informed that a couple who had taken the offer looked up records and having found out that the last decent flood was in 1998 withdrew their interest.
- The financial impact has been dramatic but shades into relative insignificance when you consider the emotional impact and the stress on relationships that this debacle has created. What does one do? Walk away and throw a few stock on to virtually self manage and let yet another homestead fall into an abandoned state or split the family as I cannot expect my wife of 47 years and Goddess to my grandkids to stay here and watch the rest of her garden die. Loss of earning power does not

allow the employment of a manager. Caretaking lodgers are out of the question with the water situation.

- The effect on Indigenous People with their well known love of the rivers is saddening. Towns without rivers rarely have any Indigenous presence. Returning the rivers to something more like what they used to be could be a help to reconciliation.

### WE MUST!!!

- Restrict extraction from any flow event to a maximum of 30% of the available resource at all levels of flow
- When the entire system has not been serviced for stock and domestic for 12 months then all inflows must be allocated to S & D and the environment and no extractions be allowed until this service has been achieved.
- The level of allocation to compensation flow from each event must be increased from 730ml/day to a minimum of 1500ml/day. Release rates must be flexible but provision must be made for rates above 730 to be prevented from overflowing into channels and intakes.
- All off takes for water extraction must be controlled at the point where they leave the river and not “down the flat:”
- Annual Volumetric allocation must be introduced immediately.
- Provision must be made for “spilled” compensatory flow water to be allowed to pass the instream dams in the rivers that spill the water onto the floodplain allowing further extraction under the common law concept of overland flow
- Overland flow extraction must be stopped. The practice of bunding has constricted the floodplain gathering the water to points where it can be excessively harvested. These waters must not be licensed.
- Qld Govt has over allocated the resource and is responsible for compensation for any cut backs that occur. If the problems are not addressed and rectified this compensation should extend to losses incurred downstream.
- Overland flow extraction was not licensed by Govt therefore it cannot be held responsible for compensation but if it does licence the practice then it will be deemed to have taken on this responsibility.
- If the environmental needs of the river and floodplain are not addressed we envisage.
- Decimated towns and Villages.
- Depressed and Stressed residents.
- Financial failures.
- Family breakups.
- The list goes on!

A supporting letter from our agent who is trying to help us relocate is attached.

M.F (Bill) and W.A Hagarty  
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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

TALAWANTA – ANDROSSA BREWARRINA

The above properties are situated on the Birri River North of Brewarrina and belong to Bill and Willa Haggarty. They have been in their ownership since 1959 and 1969 respectively. With approx 12 kms frontage to the Birri these properties have always been regarded as some of the finest in the Brewarrina district.

One of the standout features of this country is its ability to grow such a variety of feed and the fact that it regularly receives flows through the Birri which also gave very beneficial floodout to 45% of the country.

I personally listed the property (for auction) in May 2004 at which time the tree life along the Birri were all flourishing and very healthy. We have had several prospective buyers for this country, however when they realise what has happened to the river because of the blockage from Queensland it puts them off.

I personally inspected the property on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November and I could not believe the damage that has been done to the trees along the Birri due to the lack of water flow. It is an absolute disgrace that these trees are dying. Because these trees have always had a flow their ~~flow~~ system has never had to go down in search of water and now because of the actions of the Queensland Governments water policy it's destroying the environment. The result of the lack of flow is that the echo system along the Birri is dying and reducing the value of property in the area.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Noel Lennon".

NOEL LENNON  
REAL ESTATE SPECIALIST