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The Australian Senate
Canberra ACT

13th September 2006

Dear Members of the Senate Committee,

Please see attached copies of my letter addressed to fellow Australians, plus copy of my two reports for your perusal.

I have also faxed a copy of these same documents to the Senate Committee.

Thank you very much for sending me a copy of your Interim Report on Water policy Initiatives.

I am very pleased with the progress of the Committee to this point and I thought that your report reflected an excellent initial perspective of the many difficult water issues that we are all confronting right throughout our wonderful but increasingly hot & dry country.

However, I cannot emphasize highly enough the need for urgency to address the growing scarcity of our available, life dependant water resources and the desperate need to actively protect all our precious water supplies from the pressures of economic greed & highly questionable management & industry uses.

Yours sincerely,

Wendy Bunce

National Water Initiative time bomb.doc

11th September 2006

Dear fellow Australians,

We have a national crisis. Please see copy of my various water reports for your urgent perusal.

We have a huge problem here of rapidly accelerating (& well documented) environmental damage occurring in the Gwydir River, particularly upstream of the Tareelaroie weir near Moree in NSW.

Huge volumes of regulated water captured & stored in Copeton dam & released down the Gwydir & then kept in an indefensibly high weir pool, upstream of the Tareelaroie weir for redistribution through the weir & regulator structures into four other regulated rivers downstream, for agricultural purposes & also for allocated environmental flows (to the Gwydir Wetlands etc) is having terrible consequences on my small property, the local environment & most particularly, the dear old river.

The magnificent soil in this region is made up of highly dispersive, organically rich sedimentary silt & the Gwydir river banks are so fragile & the area affected, is so vast & significant (Tareelaroie weir is effectively located at the 'neck' of the Gwydir valley), that the consequences of continuing with current water policies may in fact possibly severely increase the potential risk to many people living in the Gwydir valley, particularly when the next major flood hits our region. We haven't had a really big flood here for over thirty years, so we are probably due for a hell of a big one soon.

Also in the last thirty years or so & particularly since these gross regulatory structures were built across our natural water courses (rivers), the Gwydir valley has undergone enormous worrying changes to local land management, resultant I believe, in a greatly decreased ability for the natural water courses to be able to efficiently divert & reduce the enormous pressure of flood waters off the main stream (Gwydir) in a flood situation & thus further increasing the likelihood of a potentially unprecedented flood risk disaster for the many good people living in this wonderful district.

To date, NSW State Government (under John Howard's National Water Initiative) & numerous authorities, appear ruthlessly unrepentant with their seemingly blatant intention to continue to condone the release of regulated water from Copeton dam into the exceedingly unstable Gwydir river system, regardless of the well documented, destructive outcomes of such negligent action.

The problem is huge & there are no easy answers & no winners, but we can't ignore it any more.

I believe that the National Water Initiative is based on a flawed & untenable system of dangerous water trading & highly questionable regulated water management. I also consider its bias for short term economic gains using up our precious life dependant water resources, to be actually accentuating the pressures on our rivers & in fact on all

our increasingly limited, available water supplies, especially our inimitable groundwater reserves.

I have tried hard not to blame any one particular group for the current water problems as I think it is far better if we all take greater responsibility for our splendid but easily broken river systems & to fight passionately to preserve & to fearlessly protect **all** of our precious & irreplaceable water resources before they & possibly many of our lives are lost.

Yours sincerely,

Wendy Bunce

Water Resource NWI time bomb.doc

Our water resource responsibility.

I believe we may all be facing crunch time in a nutshell.

Very sadly for our natural world, industrialized profit motivated societies generally have remained foolishly reluctant to acknowledge the huge dangers of economies based solely on & driven by natural resource dependence.

In my view there is nothing more dangerous for our precious water resources than governance with an economic basis for water policy. Highly questionable forms of water management that merely pay lip service to environmentally sustainable water practice, is particularly worrying in light of increased global warming.

If we keep extracting all of our natural resources, particularly water, at the current rate, we may effectively exhaust all hope of sustainable life on Earth.

I consider every drop of fresh water that we use up for questionable water practices, such as using regulated water for short term monetary gains is using up our children's allocation for their future needs just for their very survival.

I understand some of the complexity, expense & sheer difficulty of revoking current natural resource policy but there is absolutely no excuse for delaying urgently needed, overdue changes to the way we currently flog all of Earth's natural resources, particularly our water resources.

However I also believe there urgently needs to be far greater government consideration given to the huge risks such natural resource policies place upon our fragile environment & on our future generations' needs.

History may reflect that our industrialized civilizations generally are risking & potentially robbing the future of all life on Earth. Current economic based policies would seem to offer little opportunity for those people hoping to live on in a world with an increasingly uncertain availability of all natural resources.

In my opinion there is no more important resource than a sustainable life dependant reserve of fresh water & a well balanced natural environment. We all have a responsibility to ensure that our magnificent fresh water resources remain safe & secure & unthreatened by vested interests.

Therefore I believe it is critically important that we all make every effort to preserve & conserve all our vital irreplaceable water resources & for all governments to be wholly resolute in defending & protecting our precious water supplies from the pressures of economic greed.

Yours sincerely,

Wendy Bunce

Water responsibility - 11.09.06.doc

Think about life without water.

It never ceases to amaze me, the extraordinary ignorance & stupidity that we humans are all capable of being. Generally speaking, we are a very clever species. In so many ways we have demonstrated our high intelligence & yet we repeatedly ignore nature's signs, warnings & environmental changes.

Perhaps we just don't want to think about the truth of our environment & the finiteness of our natural resources. At present we still live our soft lives fully expecting our resources will always be there for us to use entirely for our greedy human demands & our soft life style benefits. Sadly current resource management reflects our general society selfishness but that is exactly why we require strong & courageous leaders. Leaders with vision & conviction are urgently needed to make the necessary changes to more sustainable environmental policies & to allow responsible resource governance to prevail. Changes in attitude to profit & active protection of resource sustainability are badly needed in our increasingly expanding, yet alarmingly diminishing world.

Long gone are the days when we humans can ruthlessly expect to use up every natural resource on Earth as though it is our right to do so. It is time to recognize that we all need to live & work within the framework of Nature's sustainability or else we may find we have no natural world left to treasure. So blinded are we all by our own selfishness for money & an easy lifestyle. Unfortunately though, our way of life uses up so many of our natural resources. Whilst we may survive without a great many of these resources, we will never survive without available water.

Perhaps we will only learn from our current unsustainable mindset when it is all far too late. I believe it is time to recognize that fresh water is the world's most precious resource & that if we have true courage we can all do a lot to preserve & conserve our increasingly limited life dependant resource, but only if we change our current unsustainable mindset. Only if we can resist the powerful forces of our own greed will those changes be possible. It will not be easy to make the necessary changes but it will be well worth it for nature & for our children's sustainable future.

Unfortunately, we are all living way beyond our environment's natural resource means.

Growing debt reflects this in not just monetary terms. Our natural environment & resources are being bankrupted in order to sustain our greed for profit & our demands for a softer lifestyle. In effect, I believe we have all been so blinded by our priority for money that we have lost touch with nature's fragile relevance.

Without water, nothing else matters & without freely available water, we could all die. To my mind, our water is so worth preserving & certainly well worth fighting for, especially in a climate of increasing global warming. For that reason, I believe our State & Federal governments urgently need to change current money-driven commodity based policies for water administration right throughout Australia, especially with regard to the highly dubious fiscal National Water Initiative. Greed knows no bounds, but water has a life dependant value that is priceless to us all.

Sadly, we are fast running out of time & water. Right now we may still have a little window of opportunity left for the luxury of being able to make more sustainable choices for how we use our precious fresh water resources. But if we leave it much longer & money is allowed to dictate resource management, it may be too late to be able to make the necessary changes to save our environment & our increasingly limited fresh water resources & thus ourselves from extinction.

Yours sincerely,

Wendy Bunce