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27th March 2002

Submission to the NCC on Queensland's Water Reform

Devolution of Irrigation Scheme management

As Chairman of the St. George Customer Council I make the following comments. As a council we have met about 4 times . We have put many issues on the table at these meetings at which SunWater representatives have been present. Any issues that SunWater agree with have been easily progressed and dealt with, however where we have differences we just hit a brick wall.

We take issue with SunWater holding a water harvest licence that was previously an agreement with each irrigator. SunWater deem that this licence doesn't come under the price path set by the water reform unit and as such they intend to charge whatever the market will bear. We were of the understanding that water should be charged at the marginal cost of delivery (which we calculate to be about \$3/ML), however SunWater are charging \$13 for water harvesting when the Part B (consumption charge) for allocation water is \$10.20.

We do not have nearly enough financial information to have informed input into the operation of the scheme. Channels are not being adequately maintained. We perceive that there is a large gap between the money set aside by the Water Reform Unit for asset refurbishment and what has been budgeted for by SunWater for the next 15 years- the figures we have access to are \$700000/year in price path compared with approximately \$320000 / year from SunWater projections. We contend that SunWater is using this money rather than improve the efficiency of their operation. This is a large part of the price of our water.

SunWater have taken opportunity this past season to sell by tender water that they considered to be surplus, into a market that was desperately short of water partly because of the inadequacy of the SunWater storage to deliver the product at an agreed to reliability. The Customer Council has an agreed position that until the system can operate at the agreed reliability then there is no surplus water.

Provision for the Environment

I note that "the Council had serious concerns with the three options proposed in the Condamine-Balonne draft water resources plan as being insufficient for the environment." The community had serious concerns with the plan as being devastating to local communities both socially and economically. If a solution can not be found then the Council needs to address the issue of compensation to both irrigators and communities before they impose their will on the people of Queensland. In my own case the draft plan would have meant a reduction of over 60% to the water available under my licences.

Ian Brimblecombe