

IPART SUBMISSION on WATER

17/04/2010

This submission is late but I rang Gerard O'Dea who consulted with Colin Reid and said that it would be accepted if submitted by Monday lunch time.

I am a life long farmer from the Mid Lachlan and have owned Irrigation farms all my working life, I have implemented water efficiency technology from before the term was used and have been an early adopter and innovator and developer of all applicable new technology in farming including inventing, patenting and marketing new technologies.

As I read the latest IPART press releases regarding water price rises I am filled with apprehension. These huge price rises are supposedly justified by increases in costs to Govt. bodies and to provide a return on capital however I note that the "goods supplied" i.e. water and service have been nonexistent or substantially reduced for quite some years.

I also consider that we only need one department to deal with water issues as the present system has so much duplication and double and triple checking as to be scary. I have had the same license changes inspected four times by three different people with each giving it the OK each time and taking just on eighteen months and several fees to complete, surely this could be streamlined especially since it was just a change in pump size.

In the bad old days the licensing person drove the bottom half of the river every six weeks to two months and did a physical inspection and on the day you got a yes or no, paid the fee and it was all done. There were only two licensing staff for the whole river, service was prompt, decisions were made and things happened.

This has to have been a much cheaper more efficient service than we have now

I fully understand that the water usage is down dramatically, I have not pumped since 2001 and as an irrigation farm this has had a disastrous effect on the business bottom line and necessitated major changes to the farming operation just to stay here.

The various water bodies which seem to change name on a monthly basis (surely at a cost) don't seem to have made the same changes to efficiency that we are required to, they all seem to have shrunk in field staff but grown in middle management and numbers. We originally had only one department to deal with and we now have three and then more.

Should the water users have to pay for environmental works and upgrades or should the general community? We only take 13% of the average water flows in the Lachlan in normal years and less than 7% of flows last year as even though the river was "cut off" at Condo due to no water in the dam, we all had very severe restrictions on river water users. Where would the riverine environment be without the dam at the moment, the river would have not run the length for most of the last ten years, Towns such as Cowra and Forbes would have faced a dry river for substantial periods of time and the water holes would have been drained, yet the general security irrigator has only been given water in single digit % so that the State Govt. can charge fees for non delivery !!! We actually have three years in a row of no allocation at all and only about 28% of one year allocation spread over

ten years and yet we are expected to pay a substantial proportion of dam upgrades and the Govt. wants a return on capital. How we can justify asking irrigators to pay for fish passage is beyond me.

One option is no dam and irrigators to be responsible for their own operations. This would be much better for the environment as well as the river would run much more naturally, under the present system the river is forced to run all the time with flood peaks being leveled out and no flow situations being removed as well and when there is water the river is forced to change from a winter / spring flood to a summer / autumn flood river as irrigators are forced to grow the maximum return crops. Think of the jobs that could be made redundant and how the system could be simplified !!!!

We have had a steady erosion of services supplied for the last twenty five years, now down to the point that we have to order S&D water on a fortnightly basis, with a ten day wait for orders and we now need a written confirmation of that order before we can pump, all this on a fortnightly basis for, in our case a piddling 192 kilolitres each order that caters to the S&D water use of 4 separate farms.

The justification for all this paper trail is that you have to measure all usage to know where it is going, however there is a law of diminishing returns and the total volume of water for Towns and S&D is in the order of 15000 megaliters and this is spread fairly evenly over the year so a daily exact record is of very little use especially if you admit to the inaccuracy of the measurements of all the gauges etc used and then take into consideration that we only have 15% allocation for S&D and the stupidity becomes apparent.

It should be noted that the "losses", read "environmental use" of water, to run this river each year total at least 125000 megaliters per year just to run the river.

We had a full time office in the Condobolin office in 1980 and strangely enough they seemed to be able to tell us what was happening on the river, we now have nobody in sight and a call center based in Woop Woop that needs all the information that you can tell them but they don't even know the most basic of information about the river or you the customer.

We now have a meter reader staff who does the bottom half of the river, theoretically reading the meters every three months but it took three years to meet him on the job even though he has to drive past the house and is supposed to follow OH&S and inform me when he is on the farm.

My property is situated between Condobolin and Lake Cargelligo and so when "they" decided to turn the river off at Condobolin everybody below Condo had no water, yet we are still expected to pay for a then nonexistent water supply. We were especially disappointed in this decision as the upstream users were treated differently to us (documented by the paperwork put out by the various govt. bodies) and the groundwater licenses were basically unaffected even though it is a long known fact that all bore fields above Condobolin are directly linked to the river.

It should be noted that Booberoi Creek and the Lachlan River below Lake Cargelligo were very badly affected as there were big stretches of river that dried up and with no weir pools available and no ground water these people and their stock were without water of any sort forcing them to de-stock and or cart very expensive water.

It should also be noted that the people living on the creek systems south of Condo were also very badly affected when these creeks were shut down and dried up, with some of these people being forced to de-stock

I did the right thing environmentally and fenced the stock off the river bank and put in piped and troughed water several years ago and now have a continuous paper war for my good deeds, these fences will probably rapidly fall into disrepair and the trough system will revert back to stock having full access to the river as there is no incentive to do the right thing, this will save me a heap of work, both paper and real !!!

When the Lachlan was cut at Condobolin a precedent was set and now our water is known to be less reliable than those upstream.

The Lachlan river used to "make" water from the Dam down as far as Goolagong back in the 1970s and 1980s but with the vast increase in Bores from Cowra down to Condobolin the river now loses up to 550 megaliters a day from Cowra to Condobolin, the top half of the river which is cooler, faster flowing and steeper than the lower half from Condobolin down which only loses 140 megaliters. this lower half is in a much hotter climate and flatter landscape.

This fact has been put to State water and DWE, COW or NOW or office of water (or what ever their current name is) and they are still looking into it, We expect an answer some time in the distant future, several years at least

Yet to me it would appear that the water in the top of the river that is disappearing is actually going into the gravel beds of the bore fields which have had no major pumping restrictions placed on them. this has been known for quite a number of years, decades in fact and by DLWC, and their predecessors as well but these facts seem to need reinventing every time the Department has a name change.

Originally each property with a water license had just the one license but several years ago some bright spark realized that you could convert each license into three, they being a "works" license, a "use" license and a "volumetric" license. This effectively tripled their work load over night requiring many more staff and more levels of management and required a heap extra work from us the landholder for no gain at all.

We now have three licenses and three fees and three bureaucracies that don't talk to each other to replace one simple system, That's called improvement????

Personally I can't justify any increase in fees as from where I stand, the present system is a train wreck that is happening.

I don't believe that stupidity and empire building should be rewarded but rather these Govt. bureaucracies should be called to order and expected to move into the 20th century at least, if not up to date.

Perhaps the system needs an overhaul???

Do we really need to document water that is loaded into a truck to be carted for stock water, does this tiny amount of water and its pump site need a works license???

twenty tons of water is actually only twenty thousand liters of water or 1/50th of a megaliter

Do we really need to measure all piped and troughed S&D, remembering that this is on average 10 times more efficient than pumping the water through earth channels into dams???

Should we still allow water for S&D to be pumped into earth drains and dams at all???

Is it equitable that each holding gets 3 megaliters of Basic Rights water, when a hobby farm of 20 hectares will run 20 sheep but a sheep station might have 20,000 sheep spread over 40,000 hectares and still receives the same 3 megaliters, somehow that just does not seem right. Surely there is a more equitable method???

Should water that is used to run the river be called "loses" at all or should it actually be recognized as environmental water as that is what this water is doing, providing for the environment???

We, the people dependent on the river for our livelihoods, more than most realize that we have been in severe drought for the last nine years and that water is a scarce and precious commodity and we have all made major changes to our whole lives but we also note that the bureaucracies seem to have run wild and usually for the worse with little or no regard for the realities that we are forced to endure, often at their hand.

And all this was supposed to make water into an easily tradable commodity yet I note that no water has been privately traded on the Lachlan except with land sales or to the Govt. for the last three years at least.

I can't get a bid of any size on my water at the moment as my \$1.8mil of water is now a liability and no longer an asset due to the expense of holding it and the on going costs imposed for no water and no reliability and no faith in the system. In fact I would go so far as to say that Irrigation as a livelihood is dying if not dead in our area with no young people interested at all.

I hope that I have not offended too many people with this submission but then again so be it, these are problems that I see to be real problems that need addressing

Sincerely

Chris Jones