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Re. Price rises for water:

The Chairman

I. P. A. R. I.

Dear Sir,

User pays is a fair principle as long as all users pay and on an equitable basis.

It is unfair that Macquarie Generation, which uses over 50% of the total water in the Hunter, pays nothing for off allocation water while irrigators pay the same as for allocated.

It is unfair that all domestic users are allowed a more than necessary 2 mgl/yr each, without restriction, for domestic and garden use, regardless of land size. With the new developments taking place this runs into large quantities of the available water supply. For example, there are 452 Residential allotments at the New Vintage development at Pokolbin. At 2 mgl/yr. each, that totals about 180 mgl. That is only one development.

Loading the irrigators with such a high percentage of the environmental costs is quite unfair and will probably be the nail in the coffin of most of the remaining dairyo farmers who are hanging by a thread, since deregulation, hoping to stay viable by cutting down on maintenance and labour until the inevitable milk shortage brings them a better price. A 20% increase in price ^{of water}, each year for the next 3 years amounts to a 75% incr. (not 60%), and will be beyond their ability to pay.

Why should the environmental costs

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not be shared by all water users? Why load 50% of them onto irrigators?

Dr. Stuart Blanch, the inland rivers campaigner for the Australian Conservation Foundation claimed (according to Rural Reporter in Sydney Morning Herald 4/4/01) that environmental works - such as installing fish ladders to allow fish to bypass weirs - could only be paid if irrigators met most of the cost. Those circumstances do not apply in the Hunter Valley and that kind of statement shows why it is important to have local input in estimating the needed cost of recovery in the Hunter Valley and its apportionment. (The proposals coming up have been estimated in Dubbo.) With new legislation requiring that if new causeways blocked off streams fish ladders would have to be installed, would Dr. Blanch contend that irrigators should meet most of the cost of those too? If so, why?

According to the Rural Report Dr. Blanch adds, "I completely dismiss the irrigators' view that they can't afford to pay for it," (i.e. the huge price increases he proposes for their water.) He is completely out of touch with present conditions in dairying and its support industries which are also hurting. Neville Wran said when he was in government that in 20 years time there would be no dairying in the Hunter Valley. That time has just about arrived. This ill-

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balanced move will probably complete the process of eliminating the dairyfarmers who make up about 70% of irrigators. (Also haymaking costs are already too high for lucerne growers. People can scarcely afford to buy it for their horses. People are hurting)

First the water quality necessitates trading credits for the mines and power houses to discharge saline and polluted water into the river or streams.

Now these high charges are proposed for water that has been suitable for irrigation at Elderslie Bridge (out of Branxton), on only 2 occasions of the 9 quarterly monitoring reports by Singleton Council over the last 2 1/2 years. One of those was when the river was nearly a banker and in November 2000 the water was not suitable for any designated purpose, including water for stock.

It is proposed that irrigators will stand 50% of the resource management cost. 10% would be a fairer share. If user pays, let all users pay.

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