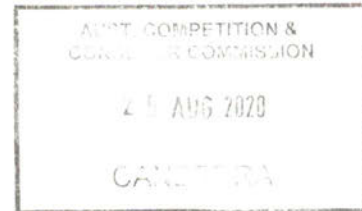


To: Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
From: Roger Hall
Subject : Water management



I am writing to you about short and long terms concerns I have on water management in Australia. The first issue of the most direct concern to our farming operation is the way Goulburn Murray Water charge us for our water taken from an underground aquifer under our property. We have a 95 megalitre entitlement on our water license, of which we use on average four to five megalitres per year but we are still charged for the full amount, especially this year after three hard drought years our water became too salty to use at all without treatment. Almost all of the GMW charge is for items for which we get no benefit at all as we cover all our costs and apart from reading our meter once or twice a year (for their own records), we get no direct help at all. The option of surrendering most of our licence allocation will significantly impact on our property value so is not an option. Other local farmers have also had difficulty with the way water is allocated, for example two farmers raising cattle were denied water from their license amount for their cattle at the height of the drought, even though the Murray River was on their boundary. This could be considered an animal cruelty issue.

In relation to the above statement, I wish to add a number of concerns. I have raised this issue with the Victorian water regulator and the result was farmers needs were totally ignored and the outcome was that the State government provided a very expensive legal team which pulled every stunt they could to deny farmers the right to a fair judgment, so the enquiry provided no justice at all to very hard pressed group of water users. We have also raised these issues with Bill Tilley, Member for Benambra, and although we got a very sympathetic hearing nothing seems to have eventuated from the meeting.

I point out that under to the Australian Constitution, water is suppose to be freely available to those who need it, and the regulator is supposed to be fair and impartial to all parties concerned. I also point out that farmers are providing food for Australian consumers and it would be fair for the non productive work of GMW to be paid by the state government as it always used to be for all costs before water management was privatized. It is also relevant that charges for water vary widely between locations in Victoria and interstate, with MGW being the most expensive with no obvious reason.

The third point here is that many of our overseas competitors get their water for no charge at all, and in the global trading situation this puts Australian producers at a distinct cost disadvantage significantly impacting on their ability to survive financially.

The current concept that water should be a tradable commodity, (that was achieved by manipulating the law), is a corrupt concept, resulting in people that are simply using water as a means of creating personal or corporate wealth at the expense of users and the public who are the ultimate beneficiaries of water use as they rely on the food produced. The final result of current water trading is more expensive food, and farmers barely surviving financially and the demise of agriculture in Australia.

Selling our water to overseas countries is having the result of impoverishing Australia. Globally, water is becoming scarce by over-use, and Australia is no exception to this. Water will determine whether or not a country can feed itself, and long term planning on water allocation is critical. Maintaining water quality is a major issue, and above and below ground pollution of water is a very serious issue. Projects like the Adani coal mine proposal and fracking for oil or gas will have long term damaging results. Compare to what has happened in the USA for example on the issue of the massive damage caused by water pollution. We must do better in Australia.

Desired outcomes

The above notes on water care and use and economic management should be addressed with a short and long term perspective considering that we have a responsibility to care for the planets natural environment for the long term and users in the short and long terms.

Water should be allocated fairly to those who are using it in the interests of the people and the environment as a whole, based on real science and understanding of the Australian climate and its variability.

Water management should be returned to government control to manage and allocate in the greater interest of all Australian people and environmental needs based on real science (not corrupted) and understanding.

Properly managing the global and local natural carbon cycles is paramount in maintaining global water supplies, including Australia.

Water should not be treated as a tool for creating corporate wealth at the cost of individuals and the environment.

Australia should have total control of its water, not any overseas interests.

The wealth created by Australian water should stay in Australia.

Note. All these issues are becoming urgent.

This letter was written by:

Roger Hall, 20/08/2020

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