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To <regional.sws@dse.vic.gov.au>

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Subject Comments on SWS Northern Region discussion paper

The Hon Minister for Water

Dear Mr Holding,

Not much is heard these days about population growth. No regional town wants to be seen as a loser and councils provide incentives to attract more people because jobs are considered a measure of progress. The problem being course that unless these people can make do with less we will run out of water.

In my youth the Australian climate was considered erratic or variable and our weather came with the territory, so to speak. The discussion paper appears to accept the theory of people driven climate and use uses both the terms climate change and climate variability. Although the community would never know from the mainstream media the science of global warming is far from settled. Carbon dioxide is a minor greenhouse gas and a doubling of its concentration will increase temperature by .8 degrees (from the IPCCs own data). Its is worth remembering that CO2 is the basic building block of life and therefore ripe for commercialisation because none of us can escape dependence on it. Undoubtedly temperatures have increased but Henrik Svensmark has identified evidence of a strong correlation between solar cycles and climate on earth (and other planets). If solar cycle 24 kicks in cooler temperatures are predicted with possibly even more adverse consequences. Who knows it could be drier still since colder equals less moisture in the atmosphere. Returning to the discussion paper (at last) plantations to fix carbon will not ameliorate climate change but reduce stream flow. My own creek, the Fifteen Mile is flowing strongly when the previous few years have seen it dry. What happened? The Tatong fires annihilated the pine plantations in the catchment. In time the state forest will recover and no doubt the stream will diminish. At any rate I think the discussion paper is right to treat future water resources cautiously.

Catchment dams on farms are inefficient but a case might be made for larger neighbourhood dams with reticulation systems serving a small district where an important crop may be cultivated without causing salinity.

Yours faithfully

Michael Burston