

Department of Sustainability and Environment
Attention: Sustainable Water Strategies Branch, Office of Water
P O Box 500
EAST MELBOURNE, VIC 3002

RE Sustainable Water Strategy Northern Region Discussion Paper – Managing Water Scarcity The Next 50 Years

Dear Members

Thank you for the opportunity to put forward my concerns into this discussion.

My only concern is the health and well being of communities and the environment in Northern Regions.

The water system is undoubtedly drying in Northern Regions. This would be not so bad if it was nature driven alone, however it is not, instead it is mostly man-made unsustainable water useage and unsustainable irrigation demands which is impacting in such a negative way upon our river systems, and environmental well being. It would be comforting to think that man could help nature out and put the river and environment first, for a change.

Practices such as rice growing in such a dry region, demanding such unsustainable water requirements, should be not allowed to continue, in a region with such predictable low rainfalls, and with predictions of even less rainfall over the coming future.

Foremost is the environment. Foremost is our Rivers. Foremost is giving much more water back to the environment, giving much more water back to the rivers, giving much more water back into the Murray-Darling Basin System.

Being able to make provision for future regional population growth is also important. The direction of future agricultural growth and water for irrigation demands must be thought out carefully – consideration to both large and smaller farming lots. However returning much higher flows to the Goulburn and ultimately the M-D Basin is most important.

The proposed Sugarloaf Interconnector Pipeline and water extraction to supply Melbourne Water should not be allowed to proceed. The Goulburn River system can not sustain this 75GL loss. The environment needs this. Regional areas need this water.

The main storage dam (Lake Eildon) needs a chance to fill, the river environment requires the increase in environmental flows, and a guarantee that at least 10% of water be stored for an environmental emergency and kept at all times, without question, not even the Government should play around with this reserve. Under the Sugarloaf Interconnector Pipeline proposal it Melbourne plan to take two (2) years worth, supply of water kept for Lake Eildon's Water Quality Reserve. This is dangerous politics, this

water quality reserve is more likely to be required, by the Goulburn River System, in times when the drying conditions are more prevalent – which could be argued is now.

The State Government and Melbourne Water will have to source its' water through other available means, for example storm water harvesting – when 882GL's of water flows out to Melbourne's bay each year from unharvested storm water, there should be 100% recycled water only for industry (other States successfully have this in place), provision for water tanks for urban households, providing a water grid by the piping of water from sites south of the Great Divide where rainfall is sustainable and reliable.

Please don't let anyone tell you not to consider **any of the above**, your task is to assess the future of sustainable water strategy as a whole package, and the Sugarloaf Interconnector Pipeline and the pipe route, is going to impact on Northern Regions water sustainability and therefore the Sugarloaf Interconnector Pipeline should be stopped and not allowed to proceed. The link between this pipeline proposal and the irrigation upgrades, it is to prove that the water savings from across the Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District upgrades are there, which are then intended to be shared with Melbourne, FROM THE ONE RIVER – THE GOULBURN. Yes the irrigation upgrades should be done, however Melbourne getting a share of savings at one river source, does not make sense when the northern region is unquestionably more dry now than before, so how can the Goulburn River not only be expected to supply more and more regional towns and cities, but now also be expected to supply Melbourne's urban cities. It is unsustainable. It has to be stopped.

This Sugarloaf Interconnector Pipeline proposal is creating a huge problem for the Goulburn River systems, future growth for Northern societies and environmental health and well being.

This Sugarloaf Interconnector Pipeline **will** extract water from an already stressed Goulburn River system. This pipe is **taking water from the Murray Darling Basin** for urban use (Melbourne use). This pipe and extraction is not right, this is not an acceptable proposal and I am hoping this committee will stop this unsustainable proposal.

If this Sugarloaf Interconnector Pipeline proposal was to go ahead at all, even without clearly achieving the 225GL outcomes, and then to allow the share of savings to come out of one system (the Goulburn River at Yea) then this really is reckless Governance of our waterways, and water security, and this pipeline proposal is reckless governance of our Northern Regions sustainable water future.

Regards

Dale Cassell (Mrs)

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