



Tasmanian Farmers & Graziers Association

ACN 009 477 810 ABN 69 646 967 202

A Member Of The
National Farmer's Federation

TFGA House
Cnr Cimitiere & Charles Streets
Launceston Tasmania 7250
P.O. Box 193
Telephone **03 6331 6377**
Facsimile **03 6331 4344**

Ministerial Water and Sewerage Taskforce
GPO Box 147
HOBART TAS 7000
C/- stewart.sharples@treasury.tas.gov.au

21 December 2007

Responses to Preliminary Position Paper

The Tasmanian Farmers and Grazier's Association (TFGA) is the peak representative body for farmers in Tasmania. Membership totals some 4,500 enterprises covering the wool, meat, dairy, vegetables and cereals and seed production industries. Members are also involved in a range of other agricultural activities, including poppies, berries and pyrethrum, and private forest management and wood production in both native forests and plantations.

The TFGA is not in a position to provide a detailed submission on the Preliminary Position Paper but is keen to formally note our interest in this issue.

Similar to what we have stated on this issue previously, the farming community is supportive of focused Government effort and inquiry to secure the supply of quality and cost-effective water and sewerage services to urban areas, particularly for those rural townships currently on permanent restrictions.

Equally, with urban water supplies largely dependent on rural catchments, resolving structural, regulatory and institutional reform issues around water supply and sewerage cannot easily be separated from contemporary rural water issues.

(In this context we use the term "rural water" to describe both stock & domestic and irrigated agriculture uses).

Ongoing reform of rural water in-line with the National Water Initiative addresses similar issues to that under consideration of the Taskforce, including water infrastructure and efficiency of use measures, security and tenure of water access entitlements, water interception, water sharing between consumptive and environmental uses, water accounting & metering, and water pricing.

State Government Policy is to increase sustainable water development to underpin projections for agricultural growth. The TFGA would be concerned with any moves that saw funding proposals for urban water infrastructure prioritised over, or compete with, proposals for rural water infrastructure.

At the same time, farmers are very cautious of any moves to reclaim rural water entitlements to supply urban expansion. Water sharing must be determined within the

parameters of Catchment Water Management Planning frameworks and with comprehensive stakeholder consultation processes.

The recent focus on climate change coupled with current drought conditions, reinforces the need for a strategic and collaborative approach to water resources planning.

The TFGA maintains its call for a comprehensive and far-sighted “State Water Resources Strategy” to secure rural and urban water supplies and related infrastructure well into the future. Such a strategy would set the framework for well beyond the current State Water Development Plan and would:

- Determine Government priorities for sustainable and efficient water development, including long-term infrastructure planning;
- Promote efficient water administration and governance across all stakeholders;
- Leverage industry participation and co-investment across all levels of Government;
- Maintain the integrated catchment management model for water resources planning consistent with contemporary approaches to natural resource management.

Accordingly we would urge the Ministerial Taskforce to consider the proposed reform of the water supply and sewerage sector in the context of an overarching new “State Water Resources Strategy”.

In summary we consider that recognition is required of the integrated approach to the management of both rural and urban water supplies, to maximise investment in water-related infrastructure, to prevent fragmentation of emerging water markets, to protect fundamental water property rights and to strike a fair balance between the interests of agriculture, urban water users, wider industry and the environment.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Swain', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Roger Swain
PRESIDENT