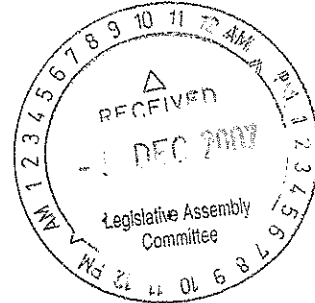




Author: CEO1222/07
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Hon R C Kucera, APM JP MLA
Chair
Economics and Industry Standing Committee
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000



Dear Hon Kucera MLA

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY - WATER LICENSING AND SERVICES REQUEST TO MAKE A SUBMISSION

I refer to your letter of 16 November 2007 inviting the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) to make a submission to the above inquiry.

DEC strongly supports the current licensing system for the taking of water from groundwater or stream flow which recognises that adequate water resources must be maintained to protect and conserve the environment.

The National Water Initiative requires that:

"water access entitlements and planning frameworks will:

- iii) be characterised by planning processes in which there is adequate opportunity for productive, environmental and other public benefit considerations to be identified and considered in an open and transparent way;
iv) provide for adaptive management of surface and groundwater systems in order to meet productive, environmental and other public benefit outcomes;
v) implement firm pathways and open processes for returning previously overallocated and/or overdrawn surface and groundwater systems to environmentally-sustainable levels of extraction;"

It further provides that:

"Water that is provided by the States and Territories to meet agreed environmental and other public benefit outcomes as defined within relevant water plans (paragraphs 36 to 40 refer) is to:

- i) be given statutory recognition and have at least the same degree of security as water access entitlements for consumptive use and be fully accounted for;

- ii) be defined as the water management arrangements required to meet the outcomes sought, including water provided on a rules basis or held as a water access entitlement; and
- iii) if held as a water access entitlement, may be made available to be traded (where physically possible) on the temporary market, when not required to meet the environmental and other public benefit outcomes sought and provided such trading is not a conflict with those outcomes."

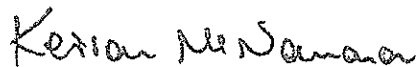
The National Water Initiative requirements are supported by the Western Australian Government's State Water Plan 2007 (key water policy and planning area No 4. "Protect ecosystems, water quality and resources").

Experience has shown that considerable resources are required to investigate and reliably determine water requirements to adequately protect the environment. Examples include investigations and studies which have been undertaken and are still occurring with respect to the Gnangara groundwater mound and South West Yarragadee groundwater aquifer.

Adequate funding and appropriate cost recovery need to be in place for this work to be undertaken. In the absence of adequate investigations, a precautionary approach needs to be adopted to ensure the environment is adequately protected. This may limit allocations for consumptive use where adequate environmental investigations have not been undertaken.

Should you wish to discuss any matters in relation to this submission, please contact Mr Kim Taylor, Deputy Director General, Environment on 6467 5100.

Yours sincerely



Keiran McNamara
DIRECTOR GENERAL

3 December 2007