

To: <reception@esc.vic.gov.au>
From: Colin and Mary Fenton
Date: 07/08/2015
Subject: 2016 ---2020 GM-W Water Plan

SUBMISSION from CJ&MLFENTON

Irrigators in two systems Namely Loddon Valley and Torrumbarry

Dear Sirs/ Madam.

We wish to respond to the 2016-2020 Water Plan Consultation meetings that took place in Kerang 23rd July 2015 with our concerns and comment. The meetings for consultation were very disappointing with Irrigators attendance. There were 15 Irrigators at the day session and 7 at the evening session.

PLUS there was only 1 (ONE) Water Services Committee member in attendance. at each meeting. We feel that each and every WSC members should be in attendance as elected delegates of the effects it has on Irrigators. These members will only gather true understanding of the needs, frustrations and the effects changes within the system that take place from time to time.

It is impossible for WSC members to put forward Grass Root Irrigators issues. Plus why would an Irrigator attend when their delegates are not bothered to attend.

GM-W moving to universal pricing really concerns us. It is very clear that all GM-W districts with the exception of Shepparton will **Cross Subsidize** the Shepparton area.

It should not be necessary to remind GM-W that independent pricing and running of separate districts was a **KEY PLANK of the McDonald review recommendation.**

This KEY PLANK GAVE each district the opportunity to efficiently reflect what the real cost to deliver Irrigation water to its customers whilst implementing particular district its reflective needs and requirements.

The McDonald review gave this recommendation to Victorian Government. Which means that a conflict of interest has occurred.

As a former WSC delegate it is in my view that GM-W has failed in its role making decision without knowledge of Key Plank and removed the ability for Irrigators to gain full Transparency of the costs even when requested to provide the information to Irrigators GM-W did not achieve this.

Quoting GM-W in the Country News newspaper on 7th July 2015 real cost reduction for Shepparton will be 22.4%. over a proposed 4 year time span.

Whilst Loddon Valley would be 4.8% and Torrumbarry 1.7% reductions. Again taking n a 4 year plan.

When Customers realize this inequity and have to carry this added cost burden GM-W will be challenged.

Comments on the definition of an Irrigator has left us bewildered e.g. Number of Service points fees is in our view misleading. The number of Medium and Large water users with one outlet would not reflect a true number of outlets even with the Modernisation scheme.

These customers would have several outlets let alone customers who no fault of their own are on Spur Channels and have NO CAPACITY to reduce their numbers of outlets.

We have been assured several times that several larger customers in the Torrumbarry area have received their new financial accounts which clearly shows that the increases you project are very much under estimated in the real increase. Therefore to generalise like GM-W have done at the meetings can be very misleading.

With the substantial selling of permanent irrigation water combined with down sizing of GM-W staff and assets Irrigators are yet to see a decreasing of the Charges in the Billing of Irrigators. If GM-W wishes to survive as a Business the only options open to the survival by greater reductions in all areas of their business.

Whilst acknowledging the reductions GM-W have achieved to date and those projected may we say that it is not conquering the realistic decreases needed.

In concluding may we make you aware that there are very few Agricultural pursuits that give a financial return that encourages Irrigators to irrigate in Northern Victoria. This is a very serious tunnel to be looking down.

As you should be aware the sales of Permanent Water still continue on reducing the profitability for GM-W and Irrigators.

Sincerely

Colin and MaryFenton.