

**Ian Cohen MLC**  
**The Greens**

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21 May 2010

Chair, the Hon. Matt Brown MP  
Standing Committee on Natural Resource Management (Climate Change)  
NSW Parliament House,  
Macquarie Street,  
Sydney 2000.

Dear Chair,

**Re: Inquiry into Water Management - Question On Notice**

This purpose of this letter is to respond to a question I took on notice during my recent appearance before the Inquiry into Water Management on 10 May 2010.

In response to the question from Mr John Williams regarding the science of groundwater use, and in particular the comment that "the science had been done", I provide the following response:

I refer the Committee to the 2009 decision by the Commonwealth Government to provide \$30 million in funding for a new National Groundwater Centre on the basis of helping "state and territory governments deliver on reforms under the National Water Initiative to improve groundwater management and knowledge"<sup>1</sup>.

The fact that there are existing gaps in our knowledge of groundwater systems is highlighted by the following statement to be found on the National Centre of Groundwater Research and Training website itself:

*"Groundwater is often called the forgotten resource. Despite the fact that groundwater accounts for over 30 per cent of Australia's water consumption, we simply do not know enough about this vital water resource, and how to manage it."<sup>2</sup> Further, the work of the Centre also centres around "the largely unexplored link between surface water and groundwater."<sup>3</sup>*

This is a clear indication that the science in this area is not complete and that more work needs to be done to ensure we are using our water resources, both surface and groundwater, in the most sustainable way possible. Until further investigation is undertaken we should adopt a precautionary approach to extraction limits from groundwater.

Your Sincerely

A handwritten signature in green ink, appearing to read "Ian Cohen".

**Ian Cohen MLC**

<sup>1</sup> Senator Penny Wong quoted from a Commonwealth Government media release found at [http://www.arc.gov.au/media/releases/media\\_22jan09.htm](http://www.arc.gov.au/media/releases/media_22jan09.htm)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.flinders.edu.au/ncgrt/our-research/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.flinders.edu.au/ncgrt/our-research/>