Submission
No 99

INQUIRY INTO THE CONTINUED PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF SNOWY HYDRO LIMITED

Organisation:

Name: Mr Henk van de Ven

Position: Councillor

Telephone:

Date Received: 30/06/2006

Theme:

Summary

AlburyCity
COUNCILLOR

29th of June, 2006.

Revd the Hon Gordon Moyes MLC.
Chair,
Inquiry into the continued public ownership of Snowy Hydro Limited.

Dear Sir,

As I received notice of the inquiry and the date for submissions only this morning, I send this submission to you in the hope that you can see fit to receive it even though it is late.

I raised the issue of the sale of the Snowy Hydro scheme with my fellow Councillors and Councillors from adjoining LGA's namely Towong, Greater Hume and Indigo. Wodonga City were not invited due to an administrative oversight. I became aware of the issue when some newspaper articles noted that the Federal Government had agreed to sell its 13% share, and the Victorian Government announced some funding initiatives with the proceeds of their share of the scheme. My immediate thought was "How can this scheme be sold without as much as a by your leave from the stakeholders - the people of Australia?"

I would like to address some of the points in the terms of reference. Some I am not in a position to comment on, some are feelings only, no facts that I can quote off the top of my head to support my assertions, but nevertheless I believe the majority of people had the "feeling" that this shouldn't be sold.

1.(a) I have no idea what these impacts would be, but listening closely to the debate from a NSW perspective, I believe there was only a short term grab for cash to prop up a disastrous financial position within the NSW government.

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1.(b) The Capital expenditure requirements were grossly overstated by Mr Iemma, to the extend that the Chair of the Snowy Hydro Limited public stated that the current Capital Expenditure levels were adequate to maintain the quality and efficiency of the infrastructure. These expenditures are funded annually from cash flows.
1.(c) Being in an area acutely dependant on water made me aware of the nexus between electricity generation and water flows.If the water flows were now going to be decided by the market and price for electricity, it was going to put at risk the massive agribusiness and tourism industries in this region. We have made a great many investments lately in environmental flows as well, and these, whilst being protected by law, were still going in to the hands of a private for profit operator.
1.(f) Heritage issues. This in my mind tipped the balance of public opinion. The scheme is the largest piece of infrastructure ever built in Australia, it was a scheme which cost a lot of workers lives, it was a scheme built with a labour force drawn from 70 odd countries around the world, and as such our first experience in dealing with a multi-cultural society, many people spent the whole of their working lives on the scheme. The descendents of the workers on this scheme would form a very large part of the population of this country. This scheme is different for these reasons to the other infrastructure sectors that have been sold by the public sector to private enterprise.
1.(g) I don't have an issue with the sale of public assets. But when it comes to water, which this is basically about, I firmly believe the control should remain in the hands of the people through their elected representatives. Water is life, and as such control of water should not be sold off.

In summary, the reasons for keeping the scheme in public hands are
1. The iconic nature of the scheme and its construction in the history of Australia.
and
2. Water is life, control of water needs to stay in public hands.

These are my personal thoughts, I have not had time to discuss these with my fellow councillors, but I do know that they were all against the sale, and our Council Meeting minutes will show unanimous support for an anti sale stance by our Council.

I hope you see fit to accept my submission, and apologise again for its lateness,

Yours Faithfully,

H.T Vandeven

Henk van de Ven.
Councillor,
AlburyCity.