

**INQUIRY INTO CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT (WATER
ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY) BILL 2020
AND THE PROVISIONS OF THE WATER MANAGEMENT
AMENDMENT (TRANSPARENCY OF WATER RIGHTS)
BILL 2020 AND THE WATER MANAGEMENT
AMENDMENT (WATER ALLOCATIONS - DROUGHT
INFORMATION) BILL 2020**

Organisation: Christian Democratic Party (CDP)

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Submission on Water

The full public disclosure of the ownership of water rights is desired by all who struggle to obtain sufficient water for their interests whether the interests be farming, manufacturing, mining, tourism or just living in rural and remote communities in NSW and in fact all of Australia. The sale of water rights to non- consumers of water is a blight on the Australian Water Management programs in Australia; and to have in fact the ownership of water to be able to be held by offshore investors is damming on the processes of water management. Profiteering from an urgent and life enabling substance is unbelievable in an enlightened world that we have claimed to be in. To have the small step of the politicians and their spouses (though stopping short of all family members) having to declare any water asset interest is a positive move; however, that needs to be urgently revisited to include all family members up to at least 5 generations. (that is Grandparents, parents of the members and spouse as well as their children and grandchildren). While this may be cumbersome in the mind of many as water rights is often connected to the farming communities and the family farm which would have at any time at least 3 generations involved in the enterprise, I think it is necessary for open government. This measure would make it more difficult for a member to create family profiteering from water decisions being made in this parliament.

I must now turn to the water allocations as it can relate to drought conditions as we will experience from time to time and this does mean that we must look totally at the management of water in a more broader way that this parliament has looked at for a long time. Some of the vision will be outside of this state's vision but then the Darling river and catchment does not consider the state's boundaries and so neither should we if we want a comprehensive solution to this water problem. In the experience of this country we have found though there is a drought in a large part of the country at one time there is significant rain in another place and the water from the raining area flows out to sea and is lost for storage purposes. We could interconnect rivers so as to harvest water from one area to support another area where there is a significant shortage. In this way we can prevent a flood in one place while relieving a drought in another place. This alone is not the only solution as we all know that blocked rivers do stifle the life in the river, and at times to the death of all depending upon that river. We need to where possible, make as many dams as possible as off river dams and all new dams need to be off river dams. Flowing rivers bring life to all aquatic creatures and are a life source to many wetland residents – including flora and fauna. The flowing rivers will keep the banks in good shape if we encourage tree growth on the banks thereby limiting erosion.

What I have presented here is a direction towards a long-term solution to recover the damage we have done to the Australian landscape as the European style of farming is manifestly unsuitable to the Australian environment. We must become intentional in protecting our environment as it is God directed where Adam was told to tend (that is care) for the planet he was placed in by God.

Pathway ahead must be:

- A full disclosure of all ownership of water rights
- The removal of the right for offshore ownership of water rights
- Removal of profiteering from water rights
- The interconnection of water catchments
- All new dam construction to be off-river dams
- All dams must be as deep as possible to limit evaporation percentages.
- All current on river dams to be assessed as to if there is a way to divert the river to create the nature of an off-river dam.
- Water storage must be from the excess flow of the river so as to have all rivers to maintain a good healthy environment for all depending on the river.
- Tree growth and other vegetation must be encouraged along all rivers where ever possible to prevent soil erosion and to maintain healthy rivers.

Anything short of this will see the health of our rivers and the rural communities decline as water become polluted and scarce for all consumers.

There is a lot more I could say as a person who grew up on a farm and I had a grandfather who had an excellent farm where salt encroachment never happened on his farm but it did on all his neighbours. Where he created a dam to be able to sustain full irrigation for an estimated 7-year drought. Where he had more wheat per acre than his neighbours and yet he had far more trees per acre as well. It is unfortunate that his university-trained grandson was able to follow the university training and destroy the farm in 6 years. I have seen the best and the worst of farming from the land itself. I think I understand the land and the environment and their interconnectedness. It is only getting this right we will again see sustainable communities among our great rivers in Australia.

Milton Caine

Policy coordinator Christian Democratic Party