

National Water Reform 2020

- Productivity Commission Draft Report

Dear Commissioner Jane Doolan and Associate Commissioner Drew Collins,

Thank you for the opportunity to present my comments on the NWR 2020.

My preferred method of a commentary on a subject is to use actual statements, understandings and extraction from the document being reviewed and state my opinion / views and the like following each passage or section, which are in **RED**.

Suppositions or Facts and Extracts from Draft Report ""

The objective of the NWI is to plan and build to provide the supply of water for the use by the population in every location in Australia. **Fact**

So, as the population grows and new industries start up there must be some forecast of these in the planning and infrastructure build. **My logical understanding**

The NWGA has a "National Partnership agreement to contribute to Australia's long-term economic growth and development by providing secure and affordable water through the construction of economically viable water infrastructure". **Fact**

"New infrastructure development under the NWI, new and refurbished water infrastructure needs to be both economically viable and ecologically sustainable, with costs recovered from users in most cases." **This is pretty much in contradiction to providing water to everyone everywhere in Australia. Cost recovery from an Industry or Company that has specific singular special water supply provided, YES, but not the general public.**

"This principle should be retained, and the Commission has provided advice on criteria to assess compliance with these requirements." **NO, there should be a lot more though here.**

"Feedback is sought on whether a third headline requirement —that planning processes for new infrastructure are culturally responsive —should be added to reflect requirements for deep consultation with Traditional Owners and protection of cultural assets." **The aim is the provision of water to everyone everywhere, so a level of discussion and advisement with all people of Australia in any location would be obvious. A dam would not be just built in the middle of a town square without talking to the town's folk. It is just straight forward common logical sense. So why it is thought that the Indigenous peoples should be treated any differently and therefore has to have their rights enshrined in this document is in my view not appropriate, unnecessary, unfair and unequal to all other Australians.**

"From time to time, governments will seek to invest in water infrastructure to meet broader strategic objectives. When this occurs, good project selection is critical to ensure that these investments: are the best means of achieving those broader objectives; provide value for taxpayer funds; and avoid liabilities for future water users.

Criteria are proposed for inclusion in the renewed NWI to achieve these outcomes. The remit of current national water investment programs should be broadened to allow funding for all major projects where there is a public good rationale for government involvement, such as on equity grounds in high-cost regional town water supply". **There is a need to populate the North West of WA, which was thought to be a part of the Developing Northern Australia initiative however it seems to have dropped off, probably into the THB.**

My proposition is the establishment of a New Regional Town Centre in the Pilbara, located on the eastern side of the Exmouth Gulf at or about the same latitude as RAAF Base Learmonth (currently a Bare Base).

Water supply pipeline from the Ord River / Dam system could be built under the banner of "The National Water Grid Authority".

Storage facilities could be built to supply the new town and encourage establishment of Agriculture Farming in the outer surrounds of the new town location and regional district.

"Finally, consideration should also be given to reserving a share of entitlements from new infrastructure for Traditional Owners. Community engagement and adjustment effective, thorough and well-informed community engagement is needed to support reform in all aspects of water resource management and water services provision."

This passage to me is nonsensical as it appears to again single out some people in preference to all other people and implies the masses should be made to make recompense to the singled out group, for something that belongs to and is to be shared by everyone.

"This is recognised in the current NWI." **NO, it should not**

"However, adaptation to a likely drier and more variable water future will require difficult decisions by governments, communities and individual entitlement holders."

There is a clear supposition in this statement that implies Australia is going to get drier and therefore suggests it is not going to rain. The weather patterns do change but have always changes; the continent will not have a continuous collective lower rainfall, ever.

"Given this, the commitment to community engagement should be enhanced in a renewed agreement with additional guidance on effective processes and quality."

What does this mean?

"Commitment to the regular provision of accessible and comprehensible water information is also needed." **Doesn't the Bureau of Meteorology keep records?**

"Clarity will be required on who bears the risk of climate change."

This really does sound silly. Seriously if ever there is such a thing, how can it not be the responsibility of everyone including the Federal and State Governments for equal responsibility?

"The current NWI states that entitlement holders bear the risks of changes to the quantity or reliability of water allocations as a result of seasonal or long-term changes in climate and natural events such as bushfire and drought.

This principle should be retained to provide certainty"

This in my view is such a broad brush statement that it again sort of sounds silly. Surely the whole of Australia is in this situation, why it is necessary to even suggest responsibility should be fragmented.

The fact of life is that without water we all perish.

I sincerely hope my comments and views will contribute in your continued discussions and finalisation of the report.

Also if you should feel a bit rebuffed by my style, I apologise.

It is difficult to choose words these days, when almost everyone is so easily offended.

Thank you and regards.

Yours faithfully,

Richard Peter Billington

12 February 2021