

Dr Karen Hussey
Senior Lecturer
The Fenner School of Environment and Society
& Co-Chair, ANU Water Initiative
Hancock Building #43
Canberra ACT 0200 Australia

T: +61 2 6125 5111
F: +61 2 6125 0651

E: Karen.hussey@anu.edu.au
www.anu.edu.au

Mr Philip Weickhardt
Presiding Commissioner
Rural Research and Development Corporations Inquiry
Locked Bag 2 Collins Street East
Melbourne VIC 8003
By e-mail: rural-research@pc.gov.au

6 January 2011

Dear Commissioner,

Submission on the draft report on Rural Research and Development Corporations

We write - belatedly - with a submission on the draft report on Rural Research and Development Corporations. Please acknowledge receipt of this submission.

We write to strongly support your proposal for a new Rural Research Australia (RRA) corporation with a cross-sectoral focus on public good research into productive and sustainable rural resources use, including land, water and energy issues.

Managing rural Australia sustainably requires extensive knowledge of complex interactions involving trade-offs, costs, benefits and perverse impacts. There is an urgent need for the sort of integrative institution such as the RRA to advance sustainable development (Dovers and Connor, 2006; Hussey and Dovers, 2007; Ross and Dovers, 2008). The characteristics of institutions that have done this well include: a legal mandate, leadership, consistent funding, and iterative planning.

Our research at the Australian National University focuses on the intersection of climate change, water and energy policies. There is the potential for considerable synergies for rural Australia from integrated climate, energy and water policies, as well as the potential for maladaptation and severe, perverse impacts if these policies are poorly based (Barnett and O'Neill, 2010; Pittock and Finlayson, In press; Proust, 2007). For example, proponents of carbon farming rarely consider the likelihood of severe reductions of river inflows if farm forestry is poorly managed (Herron et al., 2002; van Dijk and Keenan, 2007). Consequently, the proposed RRA is essential for providing the cross-sectoral knowledge needed to maximise benefits for rural Australia while minimising costs. The recent PMSEIC report entitled 'Challenges at Energy-Water-Carbon Intersections' (Dec 2010) further reinforces the need for integrated, cross-sectoral rural research, specifically in Recommendation 3, which calls for a national Resilient Landscapes Initiative to support the evolution of land systems as resilient producers, water catchments, carbon storages, ecosystems and

societies. Only a cross-sectoral rural research agency such as the Rural Research Australia initiative could adequately support and manage such expansive, integrated and very necessary research.

In our view there is considerable unmet demand for this type of integrated rural research, and that a funding level of \$50 million per year is warranted in an initial program period. In our view RRA's research agenda could be scaled up relatively rapidly from a second year of establishment by learning from and building off the corporate knowledge of the former Land and Water Australia. The 2010 conference reviewing the contributions of Land and Water Australia provide a solid basis from which to develop this new institution.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Karen Hussey
Senior Lecturer,
Fenner School of Environment and Society
College of Medicine, Biology and Environment,
& Co-Chair ANU Water Initiative

Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200

Mr Jamie Pittock
Director of International Programs,
UNESCO Chair in Water Economics and
Transboundary Water Governance
Crawford School of Economics and Government

Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200