

## Emergency Water Bill - very much a work in progress

### MEDIA RELEASE

Fair

Water Use views the Senate

Inquiry into the Lower Lakes & Coorong as a welcome initiative, and, like many, was originally unaware that the Senate committee will also be reviewing Senator Nick Xenophon's Emergency Water (Murray-Darling Basin Rescue) Bill 2008.

Although this Bill

reflects the growing realisation that a State of Emergency must be declared, sadly it permits the continuation of water reform, more correctly termed water privatisation: a process which should in fact be stopped dead in its tracks. Moreover, in the interests of expediency, it is COAG, and not the Senate, that should be calling immediately for a State of Emergency.

A State

of Emergency Board must be formed without delay, consisting of Commissioners who are independent of existing or planned management structure. The operation of the water market must be suspended and water allocated appropriately, based upon a set of rational priorities, placing domestic and environmental needs ahead of those of global markets.

It is

reprehensible that a national experiment in economic rationalism should be undertaken without obtaining the prior consent of the Australian electorate via referendum, particularly at a time when the Murray-Darling Basin is collapsing as a result of severe drought, compounded by endemic mismanagement and over-allocation.

Fair

Water Use coordinator, Dr Ian

Douglas, stated this morning that the Bill put forward by Senator Xenophon recognises the need for an inquiry into taxation schemes detrimental to the management of Basin water resources, as long-advocated by Fair Water Use?.

?However, again it does not go far enough?, he added.

In addition to calling upon COAG to recommend that the Commonwealth declares a

## State of Emergency, Fair Water

Use is urgently seeking the establishment of the first ever comprehensive public Commission of Inquiry into the Murray-Darling Basin, in order that Federal and State Governments and the water reform movement can be brought to account for their failure to appropriately manage the Basin, and especially its water resources, as intended by our founding fathers when drafting Section 100 of the Australian Constitution.

## Relevant

documentation with respect to its call for a State of Emergency and a Royal Commission of Inquiry was submitted to the Senate inquiry last week by Fair Water Use, and may be viewed at: [www.fairwateruse.com.au](http://www.fairwateruse.com.au)

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