

CONFERENCE OF LEADERS OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

CLRI (NSW)

ABN 52 476 362 010
Member of Catholic Church Religious Group

The Honourable Kelvin Thomson
Parliament House
Canberra

Wednesday 30 June, 2004

Dear Mr Thomson,

Re: Cross Border Water Agreements

I write on behalf of the CLRI Justice committee, a group representing the Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes in NSW. CLRI includes approximately 4,000 Catholic Religious and their associates.

CLRI has been heartened by the National Water Initiative announced by the Council of Australian Governments. This is an important step in developing the partnerships and co-operation necessary for the proper management of water in this country. The commitment to sending an additional 500 gigalitres of water down the Murray River, with the assistance of a \$500 million funding agreement, is welcome, and encourages cross border co-operation and awareness. It also provides certainty and security for farmers.

A practical commitment by governments to work together, so that the benefits of the country's dwindling water resources will be maximised, needs to be a priority, particularly at this time in our history.

The greatest danger in the current situation, it seems to us, would be the failure of all groups to work together because of political expediency and sectional interests. At this stage, we are concerned that the water deal does not benefit Western Australia, and that landholders could be the only ones benefiting from the plan. Any agreement that continues to facilitate the further privatisation of water resources, and that does not work towards the greater sharing of what should be a public resource for all, will ultimately undermine the rights of Australians, and a more sustainable water future for our land and the community.

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We look forward to the continuing negotiations in this critical area for Australia and its people.

Your sincerely,

Jan Barnett rsj
(for CLRI NSW)

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