

FIRST ROUND CONSULTATION – ISSUES ARISING

(This note records issues identified, and views expressed, by stakeholders present at the meeting. The Authority is yet to form any opinion on them. As appropriate, issues will be addressed in proposed Issues Papers and in the Authority's reports)

Scheme: **Burdekin – Haughton** **Date:** 18-May-2010

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Process Issues

- The Burdekin – Haughton Scheme has two components, the delta, with separate North and South Burdekin Boards (in the process of amalgamating) and the Burdekin River Irrigation Area (BRIA) in the upper reaches.
- The timetable provided by the Referral was too short.
- One respondent did not agree that part or all of their submissions could be confidential, since then he would not be apprised of any claims or assertions made therein and be unable to respond to them.
- Irrigators and their Boards had no resources to prepare submissions.

Technical Issues

- Certain plants had been introduced by Government for growing stockfeed, which now were a weed hazard for irrigation channels, pumps and off-take systems. The cost of controlling them, to SunWater and farmers, was high and should not be imposed on farmers through water prices.
- SunWater has conservation areas around natural watercourses, on land unsuitable for agriculture, which are infested with noxious weeds. SunWater has to resort to helicopter spraying of inaccessible areas, at considerable cost.
- Irrigators consider that they have already paid for certain works and some were funded by Commonwealth or State grants, so should not be reflected in pricing.
- A definition of economic value was sought.
- Concern was expressed about leaking channels, due to poor construction quality, which leads to groundwater problems and boggy agricultural lands. Irrigators do not want to be liable for any of the consequent rectification and operating/maintenance costs. Some channels cannot cope with peak water demands. This has also impacted property values and sale prospects.
- Rising groundwater has become a significant issue in some areas of the scheme.
- Regarding rate of return, it was claimed Government had a preconceived agenda.
- Claim that jobs were being removed from the regions to boost Head Office.
- Electricity pumping costs have increased substantially due to increases in the tariffs.

Other Issues

- The desire for local management of the BRIA was raised as an issue and its omission from the Review caused comment.
- The matter of Free Water was raised.