



District Council 2 and 3 Regional Update



On-Farm Meeting with Water Minister, Tim Holding:

Executive members from UDV District Council 2 and 3 had an opportunity last Thursday to meet with Water Minister Tim Holding.

Issues raised with the Minister included:

National Plan for Water Security: The Minister advised us the Government has not changed its position and does not support a full referral of powers. We reiterated the importance of the Government securing funding for Stage 2 of the Foodbowl Project.

Foodbowl Project: We expressed strong disappointment the Government did not support the Steering Committee's recommendation that headwork's charges for environmental water be paid for by the Government.

Minister Holding indicated that this would set a precedent that if adopted the environment would have to pay headwork's charges on all its water.

We highlighted that Queensland, New South Wales and South Australian Government's pay headwork's charges for environmental water and that there were significant inequities when irrigators pay these charges for the environment on behalf of the whole community. We believe this will become a bigger issue as the environment gains more water and noted that Government should review this policy.

We also discussed the need to ensure a smooth integration of existing projects (CG 1-4, Shepparton Modernisation) with the Foodbowl Project, the need for high supply levels and maintaining the region's competitive advantage with a gravity fed system, potential for those furthest from the backbone to be disadvantaged, progress with the de-salination plant and the importance for strong consultation with irrigators.

We also noted with drought impacts and water reforms, the Government needs to take steps that gives farmers confidence to invest in the region.

Carryover: We discussed the current carryover model and highlighted some inequities the model presents for irrigators with high reliability water. We discussed alternative models and the benefits of being able to carryover against low reliability water shares first.

Northern Sustainable Water Strategy: We discussed the strategy and how the various drafts and final report will be developed. The strategy will be developed over the next 12 months and we stressed the importance of farmer and community input. The group highlighted to the Minister the need for more farmers on the Consultative Committee.

Opening of Irrigation Seasons: We expressed concern that if the opening of an irrigation season is delayed, there is often still a need for stock and domestic water to be supplied. As there is no longer a stock and domestic allocation we highlighted the urgency for G-MW to establish a clear position on how they will deal with this issue.

District Council 3 wins Moira Shire Award:

DC 3 last week was awarded Moira Shire's Community Event of the Year at their Australia Day Awards Dinner for their family fun night at Katunga in January 2007. The event was 1 of 4 organised by DC 3 last year and was widely praised for the quality family entertainment it provided for over 400 people at no cost when farming families were feeling the pressure of drought.