

To whom it may concern,

I write this out of great concern for the future of farming and the lack of understanding on where food actually comes from.

Contrary to the belief that you open the fridge and it is there ready for you to eat or cook.

We on the land have been notified that our water charges are up for review by IPART as Water NSW are recommending a 17% increase per year for the next 5 years.

This will equate to a rise of 118% for the cost of our water on the farm that is used to irrigate, water stock and keep everything alive.

I thought inflation was out of control yet here we are going way beyond what the government rhetoric is in trying to reduce it.

Water NSW are doing nothing more for this price increase, they are still doing the same job when it comes to the farmer, the farmer orders water and Water NSW release the water.

I find it sad that we have a lack of housing, and all levels of government are working to remedy this in one way or another, but we have not heard of any solutions to increase our water storage to cater for these houses and people who are going to live in them.

Here in lies the problem, based on the forward projections for housing in just 2 local government areas alone in the Hunter (Maitland and Cessnock) they have estimated that they will provide 8900 homes over the next 5 years. This is on top of the unprecedented housing growth we have seen over the last 10 years.

Based on the forward projection alone and the water allocation required to be provided for each lot created (230,000 litres per lot based on the water directorate) this equates to two thousand and forty seven megalitres that will be required on top of what is being already used.

Let's say that we have provided the same amount of housing over the last 10 years in the hunter region (which I believe is far greater) we have actually doubled this amount of demand (4,094 megalitres) on our current water storage, without creating any more storage.

Statistics will tell you that at the same time we have had this urban sprawl and growth more people have walked off farming land (due to age and lack of interest in agriculture) and less water is being used in agriculture in the hunter than ever before.

This is where Water NSW believe they are justified in their proposed price increases by saying due to less water being used by irrigators our costs to provide the water are still the same, so the farmer needs to pay more. They are failing to consider the extra 20,000 plus new users that have been created that they are now charging for water.

It would seem the solution is to force up the price of the farmers water so that they won't be able to afford it, and they will walk away from the land.

When the farmer turns on a tap in their home, that water comes from infrastructure they have had to provide to capture and store the water for use.

Unlike our city counterparts who have all of this infrastructure provided for them with a guaranteed supply.

Every time the farmer turns on a tap, a pump kicks in, which in turn uses power. (and we all know how much power costs)

Every time a farmer irrigates to grow fodder and food, they have had to pay for a water licence, install a pump on a river, construct infrastructure to get the water to where it is needed, they then need to invest in irrigation equipment and labour to water crops.

They have to contend with the rivers forever changing, due to floods and drought to maintain water flow for their farms.

They have to contend with poor water quality unlike our city counterparts where the water is treated before being pumped through the town mains.

They don't have the luxury of being able to pick up the phone and say to the water authority "hey we don't have any water coming out of our taps", they have to find a solution to the problem and solve it or fix it which usually costs time and money.

The farmer pays for their water allocation whether they use it or not and then they pay a fee for what they actually use out of their allocation along with the power to pump it.

In severe droughts the farmers water allocation can be reduced but they still have to pay for their full water entitlement. Funny enough this is when they need the water most.

If Water NSW gets their way, then obviously anything grown on the farm will have to go up accordingly and be passed on to the end user. (I think they call this inflation)

It is not the consumers responsibility to fund the inefficiencies of government departments being mis managed through the inability of understanding a fair and equitable system for all water users.

I would urge IPART to deny Water NSW their request on this matter as this recommendation is flawed and unconscionable based on IPART'S own mantra and charter below.

IPART protects consumers in situations where they don't have a choice of service providers, or where there are other market failures, from unfair or unsafe behaviour such as excessive charging.

We want all markets and systems in NSW to be operating efficiently, effectively and sustainably to support the wellbeing of people in NSW.

If IPART choose to proceed with these increases you will see farmgate prices rise, people walk away from irrigation licences and water allocations devaluing both the value of water and the properties that the water was attached to. This in turn will be a far greater loss to the state government in their stamp duty revenue that is created when properties are sold.

If IPART are serious in their charter they will take the time to come and visit the farmers affected by this proposal prior to making a decision, walk the rivers with them and see the challenges we face in getting our water to where we need to use it and what we encounter every day we want to use water. This would enable you to make an informed decision.

Pleased do not hesitate in contacting me to arrange a time to walk our rivers with us and get an idea of what its like to walk in our shoes as a farmer and irrigator.

Kind regards,



Water

Is an inorganic compound with the chemical formula

It is a transparent, tasteless, odorless,

It is the main constituent of Earth's hydrosphere and the fluids of all known living organisms

It is vital for all known forms of life