

WATER EVERYWHERE AND OUR GOVERNMENTS FLOUNDER

By Kevin Glancy

In this time of drought that sees Australian farmers struggling for survival, it's a reminder of the collective failure of our federal and state politicians since federation to provide practical, long term drought proofing solutions. They are available.

A plan I reported on seventeen years ago and was presented to the then National Water Commission and ignored is featured below. Designed by a highly experienced engineer and powered by solar energy, the intent was to reduce salinity and reduce the impact of droughts and flood. It incorporated rainwater harvesting/collector hubs, pipeline grids and its cost was to be subsidised by its own horticultural and salt export projects. These would provide employment and were projected to earn conservatively, around \$600 million per year. The initial pilot programme was to construct a water grid 100 square kilometres in size and situated on degraded and 'infertile' land. The initial cost to taxpayers would have been \$200 million with the rest provide by private investment. That was back then in 2001 and think of the money we've spent and wasted since then.

Yet, regardless of the merits of that plan and I'm sure there are many others, what astounds me is this; when you arrive on an island the first thing a sane person does is to secure the water supply. Well over two hundred years on and we are still floundering.

We have more than enough water to go around but it's simply not being harvested or delivered to the right places. It's claimed that in northern Queensland alone, 48% of the rain

that falls ends up in the sea and it's obvious to all, that much of our rainfall in Australia is being wasted. Then there's the unused subterranean rivers of water that remain locked underground.

During the current drought, governments are providing some money to farmers to sustain them but there's been no mention of dams or any infrastructure that will sustain them in the longer term. So it appears that the only plan is to provide farmers with taxpayer dollars at times of drought – very short sighted and ultimately, very expensive.

We have the technology to remove water from the flood plains to areas of drought. To reduce the prevailing salinity and to open up more areas for agricultural and domestic use and to create sustainable land to attract industry and jobs where there are none. Vast areas of the middle east are now green and much of that irrigation work was performed by Australians. Think of that the next time you look at Dubai and ask, why not here?

There is much talk about reducing immigration and sustainable population growth yet three main factors inhibit our ability to resolve those problems. Water, energy and transport. Despite our abundance of coal and water, our politicians lack the courage and determination to use them properly. Hamstrung by an unscientific ideology; based on fiction instead of facts but more about that later.

If we resolve the water issues that our farmers face then there will be other benefits that will help to make our population growth sustainable.

We know there's a need to motivate people to move away from the coastal cities, to settle in inland areas that are currently unattractive. With water and electricity we can sustain those regions, attract industry to subsidise costs and expand our livability beyond the coast. With those

improvements in place new inland industries will provide jobs and motivate housing development for residential use. Build it and they will come. Our bulging cities can be freed of overcrowding.

Is this the smart country? I think not. Electricity and water are the basic necessities of modern life. Yet we are neglecting both those resources. Obsessed and blinded by green ideology, our governments are trying to avoid using coal, one of our greatest and cheapest energy resources and doing very little to harvest our wasted water. The Greens and Labor are doing their best to make sure new dams will not be built and our huge resources of coal, uranium and even gas (in Victoria) will remain wasted.

The major political parties in Australia, the Greens and even the Pope in Rome would prefer to hasten the deaths of millions each year to ensure that coal is not used. Very charitable indeed. Those still living in poverty, who don't have access to coal-fired power, burn wood for heating and cooking. Worldwide estimate of premature deaths due to wood smoke is 2.7 to 3 million annually, with respiratory illness being the largest killer of infants. (Source: Health and Environment in Sustainable Development, World Health Organisation study, 1997.

Thank God that India is building around eleven hundred new coal-fired power stations which will significantly improve the quality of life for many of their poorest citizens who have been denied access to electricity.

Over the last one hundred years coal has been our planet's saviour. It's base load energy provided the means for commerce and industry. With the spread of coal fired electricity employment became available for the masses. It has brought billions of people out of poverty and continues to do so as other smarter countries build coal fired power stations. The green brigade will tell you that coal is finished yet this

last year alone we benefited from over \$60 billion in exports of the black stuff.

As for us mugs? We remain handicapped by our major political parties who foolishly betray us by subscribing to the new religion that supports the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on humankind – man-made global warming. Here is a scam built on models and alarmist predictions that neglected to include the sun's or the cloud's effect on our climate. Model predictions that continue to fail and have little or no relationship with reality despite the propaganda that persists.

Over the last one hundred years temperatures on our planet have remained relatively stable. Scientifically, there is no evidence whatsoever that temperatures are on the rise, in fact the opposite may be true.

Our taxpayer funded media monolith, the ABC refuses to reveal the truth or provide any balance on the subject of climate change. They too have betrayed the Australian people who pay their wages.

In 2013 former PM, Tony Abbott won a landslide election on the promise of removing the dishonest Julia Gillard carbon tax. Then came Malcolm 'Brutus' Turnbull and Julie Bishop who couldn't wait to sign us up to the Paris Agreement. This they did on the eve of the US leaving that agreement which they knew Donald Trump had promised. They betrayed our country in the knowledge that the US, China, Russia and India, four of the world's biggest emitters had made no commitment to reduce their emissions. The subsequent federal election saw Turnbull scrape home by one miserable Seat. Did he learn anything? No.

We can spend billions on hosting the Olympics and other sporting events that benefit the few and yet spend little or nothing on water and reliable, base load energy infrastructure that will benefit the many.

We can add on average at least three billion dollars to our

electricity bill every year to make the rich, richer with their intermittent, renewable energy schemes, while our poor struggle to keep warm with expensive electricity bills. Now the UN IPCC wants us to give up meat and stop resourcing our coal. Isn't their blatant stupidity obvious? Even if climate change was the scourge they're suggesting Australia is blowing in the wind. Not least because hundreds of new coal fired power stations are being built in Japan, India, China, Germany, Russia and so on.

Surely, when the climate doomsayers based their argument on the lie some years ago, that we are the highest per capita emitters in the world, people should have woken up to the emotive con job.

Apart from the fact that we are definitely not the highest let's assume that we are. Simple maths: 300 million people in the US each emit only half the CO₂ that each of the 25 million Australians do. Let's call that one unit each in the US compared to two units each in Australia. Obvious answer: Americans emit 300 million units annually to Australia's 50 million. Big wuppty! Does that justify our economic suicide?

The UN's latest climate report is a doozie. They've even admitted that previous dire predictions have failed to materialise yet don't worry about that folks! Here's a few more. For those who claim here's been an increase in drought, cyclones and other extreme weather events, that's a lie too. Even the UN IPCC has admitted in their last two reports that there hasn't been an increase in such events.

What about Australia's role and assuming it isn't a hoax, is our sacrifice worth it?

According to Australia's Chief Scientist, Dr Alan Finkel AO our nation's efforts are in reality, meaningless in the so-called fight against climate change. When asked at a senate hearing, what difference it would make to global temperatures

if Australia eliminated all of its emissions, he answered; 'virtually none.'

Common sense really. We do not live in a cardboard box with a roof over our heads. We have hardly any influence on the global climate and nothing we do here will effect global temperatures. I'd be more concerned about the lack of water. Thirst will kill us sooner and the same green brigade that wants us to do away with coal are putting their grubby hands on our water supply. Standing in the way of new dams being built.

The bitter irony. We can blot our landscapes with ugly, noisy and inefficient wind turbines that kill and maim birds yet refuse to build a dam to sustain humans and wild life. Where are the visionaries and the plan for our future because if we follow the current view we'll be living in the dark with minimal water to drink and our farms unable to produce food. Australia will always have droughts, it's inherent in our geography.

Sure, I believe in making it a cleaner planet but market forces will take us into cleaner energy. If there's money in it you can bet that it will happen in time when the technology is base load capable without the need to prop it up as we do now. Those supporters of this con should stop using coal fired electricity and have to rely on solar and wind. They should also remove all items from their lives that could not have been made without the base load strength of coal fired power. Forget living in a tent – coal fired power is needed to make them just as it is needed to manufacture wind turbines, solar panels, medicine, cars, fridges, mobile phones, iPads, televisions, white goods and the material to build and furnish their homes. Hypocrites!

40,000 people flew from all over the world leaving a massive carbon footprint as they wound their way to France to create the socialist Paris Agreement. Surely it would have been more

constructive had those people been there to cure cancer. It touches all of our lives and kills far more people than climate change ever will. Cold weather kills more people than hot weather does. Just over a year ago 400 people in the UK died from the cold. Even if there was an increase in global temperature, whether there would be negative effect is debatable. Despite alarmist predictions about food, grain crop production is soaring.

The ten thousand people living on Alaska's north coast who are currently without food supplies due to the frozen sea ice that won't let the supply barges through might like an extra degree or two. Where's the mea culpa from Al Gore who warned that the Arctic ice would melt by 2013? Along with all his other so-called inconvenient truths that have been proven to be lies and at best, alarmist propaganda.

In 2001, I wrote an article presenting a solution to the drought and salinity problem in Australia. I then assisted those responsible for that initiative to gain a meeting with the then head of the National Water Commission to present their plan. That was seventeen years ago and at the time the NWC ignored it. Now here we are, seventeen years later and still nothing has been done.

Despite the claims by global warming hysterics, we've had many worse droughts throughout Australia's history and we will do so again, no matter how many coal fired power stations we blow up. Although not science in this instance and there is a wealth of scientific data to support my claim, perhaps it's an opportune time to revisit a poem written by Dorothea Mackeller. Dorothea wrote 'My Country' published in 1908, while far away and homesick in England. The second verse reminds us of our nation's historic, climate reality. This was written over 100 years ago.

I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sweeping plains,

Of ragged mountain ranges,
Of droughts and flooding rains.
I love her far horizons,
I love her jewel-sea,
Her beauty and her terror
The wide brown land for me!

*Here is that excerpt from my article in The Issue magazine
Vol.2 No. 3 January 2001. The Green Dream*

Please bear in mind, this was written seventeen years ago.

In the not too distant past, people who had dreamt of a better life came from everywhere to a land called Australia. They called it 'the lucky country' and of course they were right. It was a country blessed with dreamers and as we all know, apart from the many gifts that nature has bestowed on us, every single technological advance that the world enjoys, first saw the light of day because someone dared to dream.

They and those who came before them to Australia were people who also dared to dream and they became our most valuable asset. These were people with initiative, discipline and a sense of purpose that would overcome any problem that stood in their way and it was easy to dream because they knew that in 'the lucky country' anything was possible.

Whether it's that haunting pioneering spirit that still continues to drive us forward as we head off into the new millennium, who knows? But we still have our dreamers and in some ways we're still 'the lucky country'. The trouble is, when a country turns its back on its dreamers, the luck starts to run out and unfortunately in Australia, as far as dreams of a technological nature are concerned, there is often little financial support offered by our governments.

For all the rhetoric about the 'clever country', in reality Australia could soon become the 'what if' country. As we've seen so many times in the past, without support our

technological dreamers eventually take their dreams elsewhere.

It's ironic that in matters of sport, taxpayer funds seem to be readily available in an area that offers few tangible benefits for the broader community other than being a distraction from our problems. We can allocate extra funds to train athletes, build new sports facilities and invest billions of dollars to stage the Olympic and Commonwealth Games. We can hold ticker-tape parades and grand dinners for our sportsmen and women, yet with funding for research and development of the very ideas that will benefit not just the few, but the broader community, Australia lags way behind most other countries in the world.

In the 'lucky country' the amount our government allocates as a percentage of our gross domestic product for technological research and development is the lowest in a comparison of 17 countries. Every country in western Europe, even Iceland, Denmark and Austria spend more than we do, while Japan, Finland and America spend twice as much as Australia on research and development.

Yet currently in Australia we are facing a very serious problem with drought and salinity and one that perhaps could have been avoided, or at least lessened, had our governments in the past looked at the land and its resources in the same generous light as the one they use to look at sport. Perhaps then they may have invested in some research and development to find a technological solution. Even now it may be too late unless something is done very quickly and unfortunately that's a scenario that can cause a government to panic and apply what may be a politically sound but never the less expensive band aid solution.

Right now, the greatest threat to the land we rely on is salinity, its effects are exasperated by drought. Already much of our rural land has been affected and what was once fertile is now degraded. Salinity is caused by rising groundwater as

it dissolves salt stored in rocks under the ground. The salt rises to the surface and degrades not only the land but our water ways. The cause of salinity can be a highly emotive subject depending on who you talk to and so it's important to remember that it can and does occur naturally, as it has done for thousands of years, but it can also be induced.

Over the last 200 years, the way we use the land has changed. For instance, farmers have adopted various agricultural practices, such as fallowing and tree clearing to plant more crops. In many cases, these farming methods were simply necessary to survive, but have also accelerated the process of salinity. Trees are a good weapon in the fight against salinity. However, regardless of the reasons why, the reality of course is that our once fertile farm land is 'shrinking' and our fresh waterways are being contaminated by rising salt levels.

The problem is so bad that it's even sparked the federal government into action with John Howard recently announcing a joint federal and state initiative in a 1.4 billion dollar attempt to fix the problem. Of course whether that money is spent wisely remains to be seen. Australian governments have a habit of creating 'industries' funded by taxpayers, where those involved are not necessarily motivated into finding solutions too quickly. At the end of the day, their careers rely on the continuance of those taxpayer funds. Negative research attracts funding.

As far as drought proofing Australia goes; if a solution to a problem involves water it can become very complicated, as there are some hidden vested interests that our state and federal governments need to protect.

For instance. In a recent conversation with Senator Len Harris (in 2001) I was somewhat surprised to find that we don't really own our natural water any more. That's right! The water that falls from the sky is no longer simply ours for the

taking.

The Senator informed me that in 1992 Labor's Ros Kelly signed Agenda 21 in Rio, yet another United Nations agreement with the authority of then Prime Minister (Paul Keating), saying, "It is possible that she signed the death knell for Australian Primary Producers because chapter 18 of Agenda 21 recognises United Nations sovereignty over water in a Global context and the UN supposedly devolves or hands down, ownership of that water to each individual country".

Senator Harris explained that in Australia's instance, the Commonwealth hands the ownership to each individual State. Each State Government then transfers that ownership to a Local Government Authority, and it has the authority to do one of two things: Transfer the ownership to the community or transfer it to private enterprise.

According to the Senator, "In all cases, to my knowledge, the ownership of water has been transferred to private enterprise. This normally involves tens of millions of dollars of public infrastructure paid for with taxpayer funds. The fact that water is being set up to trade as a Futures Option on the London Stock Exchange, should be ringing alarm bells of a volume unprecedented in Australia's history."

Senator Harris also predicts, "Soon, Australian farmers will be purchasing their water allocations not from their Local Government Department but will in fact have to purchase their allocation from the International Futures Market at prices prohibitive in today's Market terms." His grim prediction is based on Victoria's proposal to prohibit storage of any more than 10% of rain that falls on a Victorian property. Queensland's unconstitutional intention to remove all existing Water Rights without compensation through their Water Allocation Management Program and the NSW proposal to use 'Satellite Surveillance' in order to charge for water consumption, without any consideration for seepage or

evaporation.

Is it just a coincidence that they are all Labor States? As Senator Harris concluded, "The power to do this began with a stroke of the pen in '92 when the then Labor Government signed away our water rights in Rio."

So the cost to Australian taxpayers and indeed, the particular solution that may be adopted in the fight against salinity may well be influenced and further complicated by who actually owns the water. Should the solution involve what could be described as 'new water resources' at the end of the day, whose interests will be protected? The Australian taxpayer's or some foreign entity that owns the rain that falls?

But regardless of those ramifications we still have a very serious problem and as we know, Australia is a land of contrasts. While farmers face drought, others are devastated by flood. So in simple terms does this mean that there's enough water to go around, but it just doesn't fall in the right places? There is no doubt that water and trees are the two common denominators in desalination so within that mix, is there a technological answer to address this imbalance without damage to the environment?

Well! Out here in the 'lucky country' there are two dreamers who believe that they do have the answer and while it is far too complex to describe in complete detail here, their concept, 'Water for Australia', may well hold the solution that would in the long term satisfy all the players in the Green Games, including the people who continually live either with the threat of flood or the pain of drought.

Barry Dunn and Laurie Hogan are definitely not idle dreamers. They are clearly passionate Australians with a genuine concern for their country and its people. Whilst realisation of their dream may improve their own fortunes there is no mistaking the many benefits for all Australians.

Talking to Laurie and Barry was an enjoyable experience, not least because the enthusiasm they share for their dream is contagious and while I am certainly not an expert in environmental matters, their ideas to deal with the problem of salinity and how to turn it to Australia's advantage made a lot of sense.

While it would be unfair to judge their solution based on what is written here, when you consider how comprehensive their plan is and the comparative low cost of their proposal, it suggests that at the very least our government should be taking a closer look.

Barry Dunn began his life on the land in northern New South Wales before becoming a member of the NSW Police Force, a job that became his life for the next 37 years. During his time as an investigator, he worked in Internal Affairs and helped to establish The Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence. He met Laurie around 10 years ago and together they have worked on their dream of Water for Australia ever since.

Quietly spoken, Barry sits in the background and seems happy to let Laurie do most of the talking unless making a comment or providing a document in support of something Laurie has said. Laurie Hogan would be the first to admit he is no longer a young man but his grand age is certainly no impediment. He exudes a youthful energy that belies his age, with a conviction strengthened by the wisdom of his living years.

Whilst he is a devoted member of the Labor Party, Laurie prefers the 'old style' Labor and for a while as Barry waits patiently, we take a left turn and talk about politics. It's obvious that Laurie has 'been around' as they say and his eyes light up as he talks fondly about various Labor characters and we exchange our political views, until I remind myself that there is another purpose for the interview.

Laurie spent many years working in Local Government. He's also

a qualified engineer who used to build aerodromes for the RAAF and later dams, bridges and roads. He has an intimate knowledge about the subject of desalination and the way he tells it, you are forced to listen.

As he talks, Laurie's unbridled enthusiasm reminds me of the late Professor Julius Sumner Miller who could turn a boring science lesson into an irresistible learning experience. To date, Barry and Laurie have spent over \$600,000 of their own money on research and development and would spend more if they had it, in order to convince others that their dream not only provides the solution to rising salinity but holds the answer to many problems that currently affect Australia.

It was during Laurie's time at the Woomera rocket range in the mid 1950's that he first began to take an interest in the surrounding desert ecology and learnt much about the shifting fortunes that nature decrees. Particularly the movement of water above and below the ground throughout Australia. Laurie soon realised that the country had more than enough water and with the right technology and under appropriate management strategies, man could work with nature and use it to overcome the problem of salinity while increasing rural production throughout the country.

This is when the Green Dream first took hold as Laurie glimpsed a vision and saw a way of turning salinated degraded land back into fertile land. For the next 30 years he set out to prove that it was not only possible but profitable. Not just for his own interests but in terms of the environment and the economic welfare of Australia in general.

Barry and Laurie now believe that by using modern water management techniques and the latest technology, some of which they have designed themselves, they can divert excess water from the flood plains to areas where it is needed most and if necessary use ground water and even desalinated water from the ocean to turn degraded land back into fertile land. All this,

while still protecting the environment and reducing the possibility of flood or drought wherever appropriate.

They would achieve this by constructing what would become a national water grid for the distribution and supply of water on a permanent basis. It would combine a network of subsurface, flexible pipes, 300 mm in diameter, laid out in a one kilometre crisscross pattern across the plains and connected with the 'mains' that would extend down through the valleys and gullies and wherever the land is undulating. The main pipes would transport water to the grid from other areas where there is an excess or they could be used to transport salinated or ocean water to desalination processing plants and then to the water grid.

Special covered water collectors would be constructed at each intersecting point of the main pipe line to collect local run-off and redirect it to the grid. While at the grid, water would be stored in large reservoirs made out of lined and converted mining voids that currently litter the Australian landscape.

Eventually water grids could be constructed wherever they were needed to turn salinated and degraded land back into fertile land and to support the particular conditions prevailing in that rural area. In places of extreme drought, a water grid could be used to maintain a clean flow of water in our river systems to reduce the damaging effect of the drought. With cooperation from local government, processing plants could also be established to combine sewage, biodegradable garbage and organic material from inland towns and cities to produce a compost mulch that would reintroduce the much-needed biomass required in the treatment of salinated and degraded land and in turn, reduce the nutrient loads that are one of the causes of blue green algae which currently pollutes our river systems.

Initially, Barry and Laurie would like to construct a water

grid 100 square kilometres in size and situated on degraded and 'infertile' land. It would house a self-contained community of scientists, students and other relevant staff for the various industries operating within the grid.

These profitable industries would provide much needed employment and consist of strip farming, tree plantations for a saw log and timber industry for both the domestic and world market, hydroponics and aquaculture industries and of course, as an adjunct to the desalination process, a factory to manufacture around 20 salt products, many of which we currently import.

Solar ponds would be incorporated to generate clean green power throughout the water grid and allow the community to be self-sufficient. Assuming that the pilot programme was successful, the model could then be replicated throughout the country, providing farmers with new hope while creating employment and profit, particularly in the area of much needed export dollars.

According to their facts and figures, the market could easily support ten of their proposed 'salt factories' and a combined income of 600 million dollars annually would be a reasonable expectation. That's apart from the profit that could be generated by the other 'water grid industries'.

There is of course a lot more detail that was supplied by Barry Dunn and Laurie Hogan to support their solution that could not be included in this article, including the establishment of wildlife corridors to interconnect our National Parks, using native trees and shrubbery to act as filters and interceptors of farm run-off, in the form of nutrients, pesticides and chemicals that would otherwise end up in our creeks and rivers.

There is also support for their proposal from various qualified specialists in the academic and scientific world who

are highly qualified in their respective fields with expertise related to the various aspects of the project. Finally, I asked Laurie what he thought about another solution that has been put forward by The Australian Conservation Foundation and the National Farmers' Federation.

Their proposal is to plant 40,000 million trees as the main part of their 65 billion-dollar programme. Laurie responded. "While we agree with a massive tree planting programme we believe that it is in Australia's best interests to take a profitable environmental approach if at all possible.

Our proposal for a National Water Grid and desalination project will not only repair the landscape but turn Australia's salinity problem into a flourishing industry and surely with the subsequent employment opportunities and profit that can be created it's in everyone's interests to at least trial the pilot programme. Particularly considering that the cost to the taxpayer to implement our 100 square kilometre programme is only 200 million dollars with an equal amount invested by the private sector."

When you consider the current and potential loss of valuable land resources due to salinity, the cost of repairing the damage caused by drought and floods and the opportunity to create much needed employment and export dollars surely, it's worth investing just a fraction of the 1.4 billion dollars earmarked by the Howard Government to see if we still live in 'the lucky country'.

In a country blessed with dreamers where green dreams do come true. Or do they?



theissue.com.au