

‘Water’ discussion group
“Faith on Earth’ event the Wetlands Centre 23/9/11

What are the issues?

- Water scarcity. Property prices based on that.
- Social impact. And ripple effect. Exports, food supply. Employment. Community starts to die.
- Money allocated to buy water. Have bought a fair amount of allocations.
- Levels of licenses... Dams, underground, pump from river, and general flow.
- Pay for allocations, and don't get the water.
- Meant to have an agreed policy across all the states for environment and farms and towns.
- Howard forced through a policy, states trying to get out of it.
- Enviro, social, farm given equal rights.
- Labour, primacy to environment farm and social secondary.
- Rural communities not seen as a big voting block.
- Cotton. Funded report on community implications of the water policy.
- Gvmt doesn't think beyond small pet projects.

Who are the players in the debate?

- Commonwealth vs state
- Country vs city. Information being fed by media.
- Eg. Coal seam gas is now happening in city creating protests.
- When water in other area, all for environment. take their water, protest.
- Governments realized money in licenses, regardless of how much available.
- Fraud. Not using full licenses
- Then big drought. Farmers couldn't get their water.
- Government cut allocation by 80% with no refund until big legal case.
- Same issue coming with Murray river plan.
- Ecosystems another player.
- Murray floods more than it used to.
- Macquarie marshes dried out, not through pumping but drought.

What are the narratives underlying the debate?

- Government defrauding farmers selling what doesn't exist.
- Federal rollover, states rebelling apart from Sa.
- Story of farming rolling out over 200 years.
- Story of goyders line shifting. Not so much for grazers.
- Drought but also floods.
- City still wanting the product, only cares about what affects them directly.
- Story of improvement, eg cotton to low water and low or zero pesticide use, predatory insects.
- Foreign purchasing for food, or for mining long term? Babylon and the exile.
- Keep farmers on so It looks good.
- all cotton goes os.
- Cotton seed used locally for oil and fodder.
- More tones seed than canola.

What is God calling the church to do in the public sphere on this issue?

- Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 stories, need to leave a good environment for the future.
- Stewardship of land, looking after river.
- Need to look after humans, to do that need to look after land. Christianity is about the humans, they need a good environment.
- Truth so we can decide what to do.
- Farmers know most
- Family farmers care about the long term future of the land, corporations care about profits.
- Zaccheaus refunded what he had defrauded, implications for farmers sold licenses for something that didn't exist.