



Ms Natasha Exel
 Inquiry Secretary
 Legislative Council
 Parliament House
 Hobart TAS 7000

Email: two@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Ms Exel

TFGA Submission – TasWater Ownership

The Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association (TFGA) is the leading representative body for Tasmanian primary producers. TFGA members are responsible for generating approximately 80% of the value created by the Tasmanian agricultural sector.

Agriculture is one of the key pillars of the economy and, with the current level of support from government, are well positioned to further capitalise on the stature of Tasmania agriculture.

The TFGA appreciates the opportunity to make comment to the Legislative Council Select Committee inquiry into the concept of ownership of TasWater by Government.

The TFGA has concerns that the principals of water reform in Australia could be undermined by the proposed State Government take-over of TasWater. As a concept, the TFGA acknowledges that significant efficiencies can and need to be found through practical solutions for cost rationalisations at both operational and administrative levels. However, the TFGA has concerns that if TasWater were to become in effect another State Government Department or GBE, that the inevitable cost rationalisations could reduce operational effectiveness.

Maintaining or improving water availability and quality is a significant issue globally. Although Tasmania has abundant water, and a world class irrigation water storage and associated infrastructure, this does not make us immune to the increasing complexity of water governance. The complexity is being driven by a combination of increasing water trading which required the separation of land and water titles, increased competition for the water resource between urban and rural stakeholders, and the increasing reliance on agricultural production to support GDP. In this regard, the TFGA consider that a better approach than a State Government takeover would be to contemporise water governance in Tasmania, and this does not necessarily mean centralising it.

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The current tendency toward centralisation of water governance in Australia since the difficulties experienced delivering the National Water Initiative, is proving to be problematic in other jurisdictions. The problems largely arise because uncertain climate change conditions and changing populations, require that arrangements for water delivery need to be agile, and responsive to local conditions. Indeed, TasWater provide irrigation water in several locations in Tasmania, such as through Daisy Bank Dam, Port Sorrell and reuse water in the north and South of the State. The water supply arrangements are specific to the communities' needs, and agricultural businesses have been built on these arrangements. TFGA have concerns that a State Government takeover could create a cumbersome bureaucracy, that will not be able to maintain such locally specific arrangements.

The National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility state that the best outcomes for improving water management in Australia is to re-assess the effectiveness of the existing institutional structures, and focus on water governance reform. Reform is needed that will increase learning into existing institutional structures and encompasses social learning, such that communities and water management authorities collaboratively improve water delivery, specific to their economic, social and environmental needs. Water governance reform will be necessary to achieve the broad scale changes that will be needed to effectively and fairly manage the water resource into the future.

The TFGA consider that the current proposal to take over TasWater is an unsophisticated policy response to water management problems, which are by nature resistant to easy resolution. We consider a better approach is to contemporise water governance in Tasmania.

Please contact the TFGA if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Skillern', with a stylized flourish extending to the left.

Peter Skillern
Chief Executive Officer
8th September 2017