



18th August 2010
Reference: WAC Open Letter_Leaders ALP, LP & Greens

Leaders ALP, LP & Greens
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Leader,

I am writing to respond to your policies issued by your party for the federal election to be held on the 21st March 2010 vs. the Water Action Coalition's submission to the Senate Inquiry Water (Crisis Powers & Floodwater Diversion) Bill 2010. This submission raises serious issues of community concerns that are not being addressed by your policy statements.

There is no issue of greater concern to the South Australian electorate – country, regional and city – than security of water and related environmental impacts. WAC is a broadly based movement of community groups and environmental organisations with strong representation from across the State. I emphasise that the WAC movement is a non-party political organisation that is seeking constructive dialogue with all parties to ensure sustainable water solutions that do not harm the environment, are implemented by the next Parliament.

Of critical concern is the failure of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority to release their science based draft Basin Plan until after the election. This effectively means that the next Parliament will have no mandate to implement required water reforms contained within the plan.

There are other significant questions that need to be placed before the Australian people. The major political parties must release their detailed policies on how they intend resolving the crisis of the Murray Darling Basin. We also seek answers in relation to the following demands that WAC made in its submission to the Senate Enquiry:

- A referendum should be held to decide whether all water remains as the common property of Australia under section 100 of the Constitution or amend the Constitution to allow water to become private property.
- An immediate and independent audit of the Murray-Darling Basin (MDB) should be conducted of all private and public water storages within two weeks of coming to office. This audit needs to fully account for every drop of water diverted in the MDB during the last 12 months, the use it has been put to and the proportion exported as virtual water.
- South Australia's minimum entitlement of 1850 GL should be restored and sufficient environmental flows provided within three months of coming to office to ensure ecological safe levels within Lake Albert and Lake Alexandrina.
- A Royal Commission should investigate the constitutional issues and operational failures in the MDB that has resulted from almost two decades of water reform. During the period of the Royal Commission a State of Emergency should be declared for the management of all waters in the MDB.

Failure by the major parties to publicly state their position on these matters further weakens any claims for a policy mandate for the Murray-Darling Basin resulting from this election.

Yours sincerely,

John E. Caldecott
Convenor