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The Research Director  
Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee  
Parliament House  
Brisbane, QLD 4000

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Dear Sir/Madam,

### **Submission on the Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed *Water Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 (Water Bill)*.

I write to you having a background in government, consulting, and university lecturer and researcher. I worked on Queensland's *Water Act 2000*, have reviewed water reforms around Australia for the National Water Commission, advised NT and WA governments on water policy, and recently published a book *Integrated Water Resource Planning* which uses case studies from around the world as well as Australia. In this book, we actually showcase some of the advanced thinking of Australian water reform processes which other countries emulate, but which, through this Bill, you are proposing to destroy.

From this perspective I am greatly concerned that the amendments proposed in the Water Bill do not adequately protect our most valuable natural asset, an asset which is essential for food production, and community survival into the future. Many countries envy the development we have achieved using (and sometimes over-using) our water. We do not want to repeat the costly struggles and buybacks which were required to remediate the Murray-Darling system. Yet this legislation sets up the guarantee that this is precisely what we will be forced to do. The ease of release of this asset to large mining companies that do not provide an adequate financial return to the community or public purse, or compensation for either the current or future degradation is absolutely unthinkable. Water is a public good, not private and should be available for our long term use.

My specific concerns with the proposed legislation are:

The blatant disregard of science about impacts of potential developments which is endorsed by Clauses 68-new section 51(2)(c), 52 and new Ch 2,Part 2, Division 7. This new section enables water use prior to impact assessment. Impact assessment takes account of effects on other users and uses as well as the environment. To allow proponents to direct amendments to regional water plans which have been developed by community consultation over years taking account of all interests, is a complete slap in the face to landholders and other stakeholders, who genuinely committed time and effort to get agreement on long term scientifically based water security.

The overt bias towards mineral resource *and* petroleum and gas industry projects with disregard to other investors and the environment justifies any inquiry into corruption at the highest level of government. Of concern in this regard are Clauses 11- new Chapter 12A, Part 1; 14 and 15.

The deregulation of water use around smaller watercourses (Clauses 53; 63; 68 -new section 93(g) and 94(c); 243; and 248) is inappropriate. Good management of these watercourses is just as important as management of large watercourses.

Any allocation of water needs to be supported by adequate research to thoroughly understand the potential impacts on ecosystems and existing water entitlement holders. Tradable water rights must be based on a guarantee of long-term sustainable use. Refer Clauses 68-new section 70; and 202-‘water allocation security objective’.

I urge you to uphold Queensland's reputation in water management, which is certainly not perfect, but if these changes are pursued will guarantee that Queenslanders are left with a very costly economic legacy in the future.

Yours sincerely

Dr Claudia Baldwin