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Hon Andrew Powell
Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection
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BRISBANE QLD 4000
Environment@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Hon Jeffrey Seeney,
Deputy Premier,
Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning
Level 12, Executive Building
100 George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000
DeputyPremier@ministerial.qld.gov.au



Dear Ministers,

RE – Submission to the Economic Development Bill 2012

The Central Highlands Cotton Growers and Irrigators Association (CHCG&IA) represent irrigators and producers throughout the Nogoa, Mackenzie and Comet River areas. Our focus is;

- Promoting economically viable and environmentally sustainable growth in the industry
- Promoting industry Best Practice and facilitating education opportunities for members
- Providing a support network locally and representing members at a district, state and national level
- Advocating “production, research, protection and advancement” of the local industry

CHCG&IA opposes the Economic Development Bill 2012 in matters pertaining to the recommendations of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry that will allow Temporary Emissions Licences (TEL’s). Granting TEL’s will effectively allow mines to release contaminated water in the event of an emergency. Some of our concerns include;

- The conflicting interpretation of the words emergent and emergency
- The broad interpretation of the words ‘temporary relaxation or modification of particular condition of the environmental authority’
- This legislation does not send the right message to companies, there is no signal to encourage them to effectively plan for emergency situations such as flooding

President
Vice President

Ross Burnett
George Sypher



- Lack of deterrent (more than a fee for administering the application) for those who apply for Temporary Emissions Licences during emergency events
- No solution is proposed for the floodwaters that are currently stored in open cut coal mines on floodplains
- Concern for the length of time after an emergent event that an application be made for a Temporary Emissions Licence
- The administering authority has only 24 hours to decide on applications that may not allow them time to complete an exhaustive investigation
- The possible negative effects these licences will have on the environment and water users downstream, through increased amounts of contaminated mine water being released.

The CHCG&IA have outlined some of their concerns but would also like to note their disappointment over the impossibly short timeframe that has been available to comment. Legislation of this nature should be considered for a much longer period, allowing for more robust comment.

On Thursday 6th November, in a press release relating to the long term health of Fitzroy Basin Water, The Hon Jeff Seeny said, "We need a solution that is firmly based on science, establishing for the first time a set of principles about how excess water from the coal mines is released into the river system," and went on further to say "We must act in order to mitigate any ongoing risk to the community, the waterway and the environment." The CHCG&IA believe that the Economic Development Bill 2012 does not adhere to these statements and instead continues to mirror the ad hoc decision making of the previous government.

In conclusion, the CHCG&IA does not support the bill that will allow releases of contaminated mine water into river systems, or any process other than those already prescribed under the DERM TEP system. Even the current TEPs require constant monitoring to ensure that water quality is not compromised.

Yours sincerely,



Ross Burnett,
President
Central Highlands Cotton Grower and Irrigator's Association

CC: Member for Gregory Vaughan Johnson
Adam Kay – CEO Cotton Australia

