



Limestone - Bringing Our Environment to Life

## LIMESTONE ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA INC.

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### **Submission re: Agricultural Competitiveness Whitepaper**

The Limestone Association of Australia (LAA) represents the interests of producers of limestone products, particularly agricultural lime, in eastern and southern Australia. Agricultural lime is an important naturally derived agricultural input used to combat acidity and improve soil productivity.

The LAA wishes to submit the following which contains additional information to our earlier submission in relation to the future competitiveness of Australian agriculture.

- Mining and quarrying is a small footprint on the landmass of the continent and limestone both as agricultural lime and construction of economic infrastructure used in the supply chain is an important component of the agricultural sector.
- In keeping with the above, we would endorse what the Green Paper states in terms of decisions about agriculture's future; that decisions should be based on science not emotion.
- According to the *Guide to the Basin Plan*, 30% of Australia's food is produced in the Murray-Darling Basin area and 40% of farmed land is in the Basin area. Much of this land is subject to acidification (CSIRO *Caring For Our Country Studies*), for which agricultural lime is an important soil ameliorant that can increase productivity by around 20%. Our industry has contributed to soil health programs run by various agricultural extension groups and catchment management authorities and seen the benefits to farming operations where soil health has improved following participation in soil health programs. *Caring For Our Country* has been an important catalyst to initiate many such programs and hence *Caring For Our Country* should be maintained and expanded. Proposals listed in the Green Paper for development of water

resource projects are supported and we submit that the following broad projects which include elements of some listed in the Green Paper are worthy of support.

- Proposals listed in the Green Paper for development of water resource projects are supported and we submit that the following broad projects which include elements of some listed in the Green Paper are worthy of support.
- More dams need to be constructed throughout Australia's current and potential agricultural regions including the Murray-Darling Basin system to capture excess water during peak flows. Whilst acknowledging that the Murray-Darling Basin Plan has been formulated and is now in operation mode, more needs to be done to ensure the nation's current and potential agricultural production levels can be realized. Possibilities for expanded and new dams have been identified by various studies and include: enlargement of the Buffalo Dam near Myrtleford to hold an additional 1mill. mega litres, Murray Gates upstream of Lake Hume – a region where dams fill relatively rapidly in normal to good seasons, developing dams on the coastal side of the Great Divide from which water could be piped through the mountains from a more constant rainfall system than in the Murray-Darling Basin and hence provide timely environmental flows. These possibilities were identified in the NSW Water Resources Commission's *Possibilities for Inland Diversion for NSW Coastal Streams (1981)*.
- The Commonwealth Government should further encourage exports of agricultural produce through increased emphasis in Trade Commissioner activities, particularly participation at trade shows, trade negotiations, industry conferences and support for agricultural industry groups' overseas promotional activities. Key markets to target include Japan, China, South East Asia, Europe, the Middle East and USA. This will lead to downstream boost in exports, production and employment in the sector.
- Australia is known for its quality hygienic (clean green) agricultural produce and this should be emphasized in marketing efforts.
- Imports of competing agricultural produce should be cut especially where imports threaten the ongoing viability of a sector and the social and economic structure of regions. Where imported or potentially imported products have quarantine issues around them, those products should be excluded until it is clearly proven that there would be no potential harm to the population or the agricultural production environment in Australia.

The LAA would be pleased to provide more information as required and can be contacted in the first instance through the undersigned.

Yours sincerely,

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Public Affairs Manager

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