

## LIMESTONE ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA INC.

### 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 in relation to the future competitiveness of Australian agriculture.

- 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.
- 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 1 mill. 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 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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