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MEDIA STATEMENT - for immediate release

Kimberley water under threat - Tell him he's pipe dreaming

The WA Premier has Kimberley water in his sights with further plans to industrialise the internationally renowned wilderness region. The community says "Tell him he's pipe dreaming."

The WA Government is investigating taking water from the Fitzroy River in the Kimberley to Perth. Colin Barnett's previous plan was scrapped in 2005 and he subsequently lost the election on this issue. An independent report¹ commissioned by the State Government stated:

"While several methods are technically capable of delivering water from the Kimberley to Perth, the water would cost much more (at least five times) than if supplied by other available options and offers no other significant advantages to the State's development." (see more below)

At a protest in Broome today to welcome WA Minister for Environment Bill Marmion, Environs Kimberley Director Martin Pritchard said:

"The Premier lost the 2005 election on this issue and the community here is sending a very strong message to Mr Barnett and the Minister for the Environment that the Fitzroy River will not be dammed and that Kimberley water will stay in the Kimberley."

Another issue that is 'under the radar' is the proposal for a whole new coal and uranium mining province in the Fitzroy Valley. A proposal by Rey Resources which has pegged 8,000km² of coal mining tenements in the Kimberley is being pushed by the company right now.

"This would be like putting the Hunter Valley coal mining province in the Kimberley with the Ranger Uranium mine on top." Mr Pritchard said.

"The Premier is beginning to show some leadership on the coal proposal in Margaret River he now needs to put his attention on the Kimberley coal proposal. We are looking at a multi mine coal basin if this area is not protected" said Mr Pritchard.

"The ground and surface water in the Fitzroy Valley are under extreme threat. What this community is saying is that the Kimberley's greatest assets are its natural and cultural values and these should be protected if we are going to have a long term sustainable economy into the future" Mr Pritchard said.

For further comment: Martin Pritchard 0427 548 075

¹ <http://www.water.wa.gov.au/PublicationStore/first/64772.pdf>

“Options for bringing water to Perth from the Kimberley - An Independent Review”

Document available here:

<http://www.water.wa.gov.au/PublicationStore/first/64772.pdf>

SUMMARY OF EXPERT PANEL FINDINGS

Technical and Economic Issues

- The lowest cost option to supply water from the Kimberley to Perth by matching growth in water demand, is through transporting water in super tankers. This was \$6.70/kL, **more than five times the cost of desalination.**
- To be competitive with other sources available to the Water Corporation, the cost of delivering water from the Kimberley would need to be reduced by 80 per cent. This was not seen as achievable by any of the options studied even taking an optimistic view of the development of new technologies in the future.
- Incorporating a Kimberley water supply into the Water Corporation’s supply scheme may be expected to **at least double the average annual household water bill**, from \$304 to >\$610 per yr
- The use of the water en-route to Perth was not economically viable for irrigated agriculture, rehabilitation of native vegetation, or town and community water supplies (the cost of water from either a pipeline or canal would be ~100 to 200 times more expensive than current prices for irrigation water).

Environmental and Social Issues

- There is limited knowledge on the hydrogeology and ecology of the Kimberley region.
 - On the information available, the pipeline and canal options would require the construction of some storage in the Fitzroy valley, which could include a dam on the river and/or some large off-stream storage towards the lower end of the river.
 - The Indigenous Kimberley communities that would be affected did not support taking water from the region. Also, the resolution of Native Title and land acquisition could be expected to take considerable time, particularly for the pipeline and canal options.
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