Wednesday, 6 April 2011

MEDIA RELEASE

Save the Nature of the Kimberley
environs KIMBERLEY INC

Barnett's pipe dream for taking water from the Kimberley: huge burden on taxpayers, devastation for the Fitzroy River

The news that WA Premier Barnett has put a Kimberley pipeline back on the political agenda shows that he has failed to deliver his promise for a long term plan on water for the State, Environs Kimberley Director Martin Pritchard said in Broome today.

"This idea has had more starts than Pharlap, but fans of a pipeline, led by the Premier have yet to demonstrate the viability of this proposal. That the north is wet and the south dry is no reason to build an inefficient canal or pipe the length of the state," Environs Kimberley Director Martin Pritchard said today.

"On the first day of his election campaign as re-installed Opposition Leader back in 2008, Colin Barnett assured Western Australians that this project was 'dead'," Mr Pritchard said.

In his 2008 election campaign, Mr Barnett said that he would bring out a long term plan for water, but that this would not include a canal. In an interview, he went on to say that the 2005 election had functioned as a referendum on his multi-billion dollar plans for a canal, and that he took his electoral defeat at that election as a vote against it[1].

In 2006, the then Labor government looked into the viability of bringing water from the Kimberley to the south – and found that it would not be an economically viable option. The report costed water transported this distance via a pipeline or canal to be between 100 and 200 times the normal prices for bulk water.[2]

"The report to Premier and Cabinet estimated that household water bills would be at least doubled with such a project – yet Barnett is still trying to breathe life back into this project," Mr Pritchard continued.

"The Premier is failing West Australians on water management. He needs to get serious about water efficiency and local water supply measures instead of flogging a dead horse in the Kimberley."

"A Federal Government report[3] last year showed that using water that is available locally and making the best use of it is much cheaper than moving it thousands of kilometres across the country. The Premier needs to justify why he's proposing an option that would place a huge burden on taxpayers as well as devastate one of Australia's largest free flowing rivers in the Kimberley, the Fitzroy River." Mr Pritchard said.

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[1] http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/barnett-axes-plan-for-canal-to-perth/story-e6frg6pf-1111117147571

[2] WA Department of Premier and Cabinet (2006) *Options for bringing water to Perth from the Kimberley* (www.water.wa.gov.au/PublicationStore/first/64772.pdf)

[3] Water for the future: Moving water long distances: Grand schemes or pipe dreams? http://www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/action/pubs/moving-water.pdf

Report by the Australian Government

Water for the future: Moving water long distances: Grand schemes or pipe dreams?

Key facts

- Moving water long distances is costly, energy intensive, and can have significant environmental, social and cultural impacts.

- Using water that is locally available is generally more cost effective than transporting water long distances. Current studies show that local options, such as water conservation, desalination and recycling, cost around $1–2 per thousand litres; a supply from 1500 kilometres (km) away would cost around $5–6 per thousand litres.

- Much of northern Australia can be described as 'annually water limited'. This means that in general, more water is lost every year through evapotranspiration than falls as rain.

- Most rainfall in northern Australia falls near the coast, not in river headwaters, and runs off to the sea.

- The landscape across much of the north is gently undulating and at a low elevation, presenting few opportunities for surface water storage such as dams

http://www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/action/pubs/moving-water.pdf