

John Thomas
South River Rd.,
Carnarvon W.A. 6701

30th October 2007

Attention Ms Criddle
Economic Regulation Authority

Re; Objection to the extension of the Gascoyne Water Co-Op Licence.

Dear Ms Criddle,

I am a commercial grower in Carnarvon and have owned and operated a plantation for over 50 years, I have also during that time had extensive experience with water boring and the identification of water sources for the horticulture industry of Carnarvon.

Our industry has seen massive changes to water availability during the last 50 years, commencing with total reliance on local sources (ie shallow and deep aquifers in the Gascoyne river adjoining the plantations). Then a pilot scheme was established which resulted in the Water Corporation providing non-potable water through a reticulated scheme sourced from bores near Rocky Pool. This scheme was later taken over by the Gascoyne water Co-op and is now operated by them.

The main purpose of this scheme was and is to insure security of water supply during times of non-river flow. Since the scheme has been taken over by the Gascoyne Water Co-Op they have extended their customer base to non commercial blocks and have for the last 6 to 8 months been supplying sub contractors on the gas pipeline up to 3 road trains (approximately 100000 litres of water) per day.

During a hot spell in April 2007 the scheme could not cope and commercial growers could not access sufficient water to satisfy their crops and with the additional connections to the scheme since then and now the Co-Op proposed expansion, I am very concerned that a crisis will arise and that many commercial crops will die through lack of water.

Our Horticulture district is totally reliant on water sources contained in a narrow band in and adjacent to the Gascoyne River bed. This narrow band is bordered by aquifers of high salinity water, which has over the past 50 years encroached on and destroyed good sources of water. Many plantations had good water in wells and bores sometimes up to a kilometre from the river-bed and now almost exclusively these wells and bores are saline and unusable, principally due to over pumping.

If, as in the past, the river does not run this summer we could face a crisis where the Rocky Pool bores are unable to supply town and plantation needs.

I hope you take time to consider my submission at a time when water sources are so precious.

Thanking you

John Thomas