

submission to the Consultation draft Fitzroy-Derby water resources management plan

I am writing because the natural environments of this planet, the only one with life on it, are clearly in terminal decline. Temperature rise and increased climate disruption is bound to continue.

From: Socioeconomic impacts of marine heatwaves: Global issues and opportunities

<https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.abj3593>

“The likelihood and intensity of Marine Heat Waess have increased substantially in recent decades, largely due to broad-scale warming attributed to anthropogenic climate change, and are projected to intensify in coming decades. Concurrently, reported ecological impacts, changes in ecosystem services, and economic losses have also increased markedly”

Ocean temperatures and air temperatures have a huge impact on climate, and now, having exceeded 1.5 degrees of warming we can only say that weather events are likely to become more extreme and unpredictable. Therefore, it is probably not wise to be building large irrigation schemes. The only large Aboriginal irrigation scheme I know of is in Western Victoria used to farm eels in an area disrupted by volcanism.

The Consultation Draft April 2026 appears to be more a public relations exercise than an attempt to clarify objectives for large irrigation projects using rivers and aquifers in the Fitzroy Basin.

The Consultation Draft does not have enough detail in it to reassure readers that the authors know what they are talking about.

I have relations living in Perth who say the tap water there is undrinkable, so they buy bottled water. If the Western Australian government, based in Perth, can't supply good quality water to its citizens it should not be in charge of irrigation projects 3000 kilometres away.

Many irrigation projects in Australia have failed or created unforeseen, or gross but unacknowledged, adverse impacts.

Major Issues

A Why are these large irrigation schemes deemed desirable or even necessary?

Is it just the vacuous notion that everything that can be sold should be sold, (even where that property belongs to someone else)?

B. Aboriginal people have been in Australia for at least 60, 000 years and have lived intimately in natural environments for all that time. Why have they not been allowed to manage use of land and water as they choose?

C. If the irrigation schemes proceed, what compensation will be given to the Aboriginal owners of land and water?

D. Large irrigation farms will bring big changes to wildlife habitat. There could be species there we don't know about yet e.g. stygofauna in aquifers, cryptic insects, small mammals. How will newly discovered species be managed?

E. Will privatization of water exempt government from all liability?

F. What is the expected life span of the irrigation scheme?

G. The Gouldian Finch needs a lot more support than proposed in this draft doc.

Other big issues

1. Will all the water be taken out of the Fitzroy River or any of its tributaries at any time? (as has happened in other places).
 - 1.a What level of flow across the seasons will be maintained for environmental purposes?
2. Why cannot the anticipated increase in rainfall in the catchment be used to maintain floodplain watering?
3. Will turbidity in the waters of the Fitzroy be increased by expanded irrigation farming and if so to what extent?
4. Will pollutants such as pesticides, herbicides, oils, or other chemicals be allowed to enter the waters of the Fitzroy or its tributaries?
5. Will the existing barrage on the Fitzroy River be increased in height, or removed?
 - 5a. Will more barrages or dams be built on the Fitzroy or any of its tributaries?
6. How much water will be extracted from the various aquifers/groundwater?
 - 5.a Will aquifers be wholly or partially depleted?
7. Will natural coastal vegetation be impacted by altered water flow regimes in the Fitzroy River or in aquifers that flow to the coast?
8. Will seagrass beds or ocean reef systems be impacted by water extraction from the Fitzroy River system e.g. by freshwater springs below the surface of the ocean?
9. What will be the impact on the lower reaches and mouth of the Fitzroy River, where fish and other species migrate in and out, or reside?
In particular how will any changes affect the future for endangered Swordfish
10. How will salinity be addressed
 - 10.a Will salinity be capped and at what level?
11. Will water be supplied to irrigators via channels, pipes or water pumps?
12. Who will own the land subject to irrigation
 - 12.a. Is foreign investment involved.
13. Who will pay for establishment of infrastructure?
14. Will water use and water quality be constantly monitored and logged, and all records be publicly available?
 - 14.a Will the water monitor be an independent authority?
15. Will existing water quality be maintained, and if not, what standards will be set for water quality?
16. Will farm effluent be cleaned before release to the natural environment?
16. How will insect plagues or other plagues on crops be managed?
17. What impacts will sea level rise have on the river and irrigation scheme?