

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Water deals

SIR: THE proposed biofuel development for Murtoa, Wimmera Mail-Times, April 5, is exciting, but I am concerned by the reported statement:

"Mr Saunders said future access to water had been critical in the company's site selection."

Exactly what access has the company been promised, and by whom? The State Government or GWMWater who certainly have a track record for deals as witnessed by the Iluka arrangements.

I do not think any water should be allocated until supply can be guaranteed to the long-suffering existing customers of GWMWater such as the irrigators, the intensive animal industries, farmers, what about recreational dams? And of course Iluka.

It is not good enough to guess that extra water will be available once the pipeline is installed. We need to see the storages rise to reasonable levels before assuming extra water can be allocated to anyone. The reality is that storage levels have fallen during the past three years despite severe water restrictions being in place.

It might be that existing irrigation entitlements will never be honoured in the future, and that water will be allocated to more 'deserving' uses such as a biofuel factory, but at least this could be achieved in a transparent and open process and not through a series of deals presented as fait accompli.

As well as biofuel company Agri Energy Limited, Astron Resources and other sand miners, who knows what else is in the wings wanting water? Big developments seem to get special treatment.

New water allocations should not be made until existing users have been supplied and we see the storages rise. That's just commonsense.

**Bill Gardner
Laharum**

Diverting rainfall

SIR: JUST when I thought I didn't have to worry about this year's rain with all the cyclones around and experts talking up the job, up bobs Aqueiss again.

Last year this technology worked so well for the farmers around the Wimmera who paid for diverted rain that for probably the first time areas like Rupanyup got 100mm more rainfall than our more reliable area of Patyah, north of Edenhope-Apsley, which normally gets 550mm but only got 200mm.

Letter of the Week

Wimmera Mail-Times recognises its reader writers with a Letter of the Week award. The person judged to have written the best letter will receive a Parker pen. The author of the letter of the week will be revealed each Monday.

Collect your Parker pen by presenting suitable identification to the Wimmera Mail-Times editorial department at 84-92 Wilson Street during office hours.

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For the uninitiated, Aqueiss diverts rain-bearing systems from outside Australia's sovereign waters to whoever is willing to pay.

Last year even though the Wimmera — Aqueiss's target area — got low rainfall it was a lot higher relative to our area of Patyah-Naracoorte-Lucindale which got 30 per cent less rain than 1982, our prior driest year.

I think Aqueiss has moved on but still working, and from the April 4 Wimmera Farmer, Geelong might be the new area as well as overseas. Perhaps other farmers or water authorities in other areas or overseas have also realised the resonance rays and chaos theories do work and have outbid the Wimmera farmers — diverting your rain as well.

Two weeks ago we were promised by the experts an inch of rain and a sheep weather alert and Robe its first ever hurricane.

We got dust storms, Robe got hardly enough wind to turn a windmill. Melbourne and Geelong got good rains.

We were promised 20mm for this week, now nothing. Where did it go?

Every new product like drenches, medicines, tractors, cars, pipelines etc have to go through a regulatory process to prove and publish any side effects before they can be used.

Could Aqueiss be the thalidomide of weather? Good for some, disaster for others.

Before Aqueiss was let loose where was the data proving his is new rain and not mine or someone else's rain?

I can't believe that someone is legally allowed to divert my rain to anyone else willing and able to pay for it. I think it is illegal to use this technology for defence purposes. How come he can just zoom out into the dust wherever he chooses, to zap the weather systems?

Once zapped, where is the data that proves this rain-bearing system wasn't headed for my place before it was diverted to his clients?

This time last year the southern oscillation index, SOI, was plus 18 and no-one was talking drought. Now the SOI is minus 7 and heading south and experts reckon a good season is assured.

Experts never predicted the drought and forecast an early break this year.

Thirty per cent less rain than ever — even 1982 — and five weeks later than 1983 for the break already.

Despite all the money being thrown at it, accurate forecasts more than five minutes out seem more remote than ever.

No-one seems to be able to predict with any certainty anything that you could base any economic decision on, especially the well paid weather bureau, but at least it would be one less concern if I could be assured that my rain is not being deliberately diverted to water some fat cats' lawns.

**Trevor Domaschyn
Patyah**

Easter egg hunt

SIR: I WOULD like to make a public thank you to the Bendigo Bank staff who helped coordinate the Easter egg hunt at Horsham City Oval on Good Friday.

It was a terrific morning, with a fantastic turn-out of families. Not only was it a great fund-raiser for the Royal Children's Hospital Good Friday Appeal, but it was a great excuse to get out with family and friends and witness the wonder of childhood.

There is nothing better than seeing the joy on so many healthy little faces. This is one mum who hopes it will become a regular, annual event.

**Michelle Stehn
Horsham**

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