

Submission to Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham
re: water Enquiry -red/green tape

From Mark Mathews - Mathews Civil & Asphalt Pty Ltd Dubbo

Dear Sirs ,

I would like to raise my concerns about the substantial waste of resources in the civil construction industry in this country, waste which is wide spread & systemic, the cost of which is anyone's guess.

I am a civil contractor from Dubbo in central NSW with over 30 years experience.(roads & bridges)

I would like to add my view on the discussion about green practices in this country.

I find it frustrating and disappointing to be constantly enslaved in these pointless and costly activities. In particular – the always omnipresent sediment control measures, it is insidious, it is everywhere and it is compulsory. The planning / documentation / implementation / verification / policing & compliance.

Everyone wants to improve the environment, no more so then I, especially my much beloved inland rivers.

But I feel the current practices are so disproportionate & non effective the whole system can only be described as a scam.

I have worked on farms in NSW & been engaged to fill in / remediate scoured farm areas, a task which requires shifting thousands of tons of soil with trucks or scrapers each day ,the quantities State wide would be mind boggling. While all farmers are well aware of this danger & government departments were created to combat it , the fact remains that the quantities of sediment involved are staggering.

I have stood on river banks in flood time & witnessed first hand the collapse of a large bank into the river (attached are photos of recent slips on the Barwon when nothing more than a rise in level passed through) again the volumes are staggering.

I am not proposing sediment is good, rather all rivers are constantly changing & sediment is not unusual in a river . Also that the agricultural industry is well aware of the cost of this problem & are doing there best to combat it.

The civil & construction industries contribution to this problem is miniscule but are being targeted by a system which seems to be controlled by disconnected Ideological Zealots , where the only possible outcome is to make them feel better.

I & all the others I know are constantly spending resources to no perceivable purpose, indeed more often than not an officer from the Council/PWD/ DPI will say things like – yeah I know it's a waste of time but just run some sediment fence here & some hay bails there, we my be on ground as flat as 1/1000 fall or a site where there is no possible way sediment can be a problem yet still the nonsense goes on. On a recent trip through the Blue Mountains it looked like Cristo had visited the site & wrapped the hole thing up ,except it wasn't plastic it was a geo fabric (Bidum 34 unless I'm mistaken) it seems no expense is too great for the Gods of Green
If there is a site that is prone to erosion simple measures can be taken, such as sediment traps (a pit in the outlet channel can be very cost effective).

This huge ineffective expense cast onto the Industry could be better spent.

While sediment is a natural phenomena , pollutants such as Nutrients particularly cattle waste is not, I have seen most of the rivers in inland NSW affected by this , some so foul Burke nor Wills at their most desperate would not have sampled it

Another that concerns me is the chemical waste of substantial inland towns

Every time a street is resealed thousands of litres of bitumen containing cutting agents (usually kerosene) that leach directly to the river via nice straight pipes . Rubber from thousands of car tyres along with the usual oil & diesel residues , a cocktail that can be easily seen on any first rain

event as it enters the pit for its last leg before beginning its epic voyage down the darling river basin

A solution I have suggested to various environmental officers would be to pump the first flush of say 100 cubic meters or so from a final storm water pit to a settlement/wet land area near by, not hard to do I would have thought in the towns I know, but it seems the cost while not much is prohibitive , The money tied up in what can only be described as this green Scam is staggering & a small fraction could easily be redirected for a few meaningful Gross Pollutant Traps & what I'd like to see a few wet lands (no big drama just a designated area to settle water on) I & all of my friends would gladly scrap this rubbish & pay a levy of a couple of thousand dollars a year for real gains in this area.

It is time to stand up to these Green Zealots & argue this case for they are so brainwashed & one eyed they can't recognise the truth until someone of clear thinking points out the blatantly obvious.

Hoping this view is useful to your enquiry & some changes may occur.

Attached are a couple of photos of old sediment fences that seem to litter the road sides & water ways these days. And a photo of recent river bank slips on the Barwon River near Walgett NSW.

Yours respectfully Mark Mathews



