



Introducing the Bondi Group

Murray Smith

Bondi Group member & Chief Executive, Coleambally Irrigation Cooperative Limited

Across the nation the water industry is experiencing unprecedented political and community interest. There has never been a greater push for change to allow better management of a scarce resource.

The ongoing drought and climate change and variability has increased the pressure on water managers, which includes all locally owned irrigation entities. Private irrigation entities are being forced to the political table to argue for and provide for the long-term viability of their customers and communities.

Birth of the Bondi Group

It is in the context of national change that the Bondi Group came about – specifically in response to pressure being exerted by the Australian Bankers Association (ABA) attempting to devolve bulk water licences to individuals. This would cripple the capacity of locally owned irrigation schemes to be sustainable into the future. This attack went to the heart of “sovereign risk” and needed to be countered.


This critical issue drove a group of concerned CEOs and directors to meet with Malcolm Turnbull in Sydney in November 2006. After this meeting at which a number of issues including water recovery and water trading were raised, the group adjourned to Bondi Beach to have lunch. At this lunch it was recognised how valuable it was for a “think tank” group of experienced private water managers from across Australia to get together and respond to political change with one voice. Current industry bodies such as ANCID or IAA are not political, and lobbying groups such as the NSW Irrigators’ Council are state bound and represent both government-owned and privately run schemes as well as individual irrigators. The Bondi Group members believe they can only make an impact if they present a united voice on issues and can be represented at the highest levels of government and bureaucracy.

The Bondi Group was then formed with the name intended to provide a media hook and to allow for “tongue-in-cheek” competition with such groups as the Wentworth Group. The informal group started with initial representation from

Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania and New South Wales and it was agreed to allow as honorary members those moving towards privatisation, ie local ownership.

The group has now formalised into an association called the Australian Private Irrigation Entities to be known as the Bondi Group. Its membership includes:

- Clyde Water Trust (Tasmania)
- Coleambally Irrigation Co-operative Ltd (NSW)
- Euston Co-operative (NSW)
- Gascoyne Water Co-operative Ltd (WA)
- Harvey Water (WA)
- Jemalong Irrigation Ltd (NSW)
- Jenni Mattila and Company (Honorary)
- Moira Private Irrigation District (NSW)
- Mourquong Private Irrigators (NSW)
- Murray Irrigation Ltd (NSW)
- Murrumbidgee Private Irrigators (NSW)
- North Burdekin Water Board (QLD) (Honorary)
- Ord Irrigation Co-operative (WA)
- Pioneer Valley Water Board (QLD) (Honorary)
- Pomona Irrigation Trust (NSW)
- Preston Valley Irrigation Co-operative (WA)
- South Burdekin Water Board (QLD) (Honorary)
- West Corrigan Private Irrigation District (NSW)
- Western Murray Irrigation Ltd (NSW)

The papers that the Bondi Group has presented to Government on a range of topics can be downloaded from the group’s web site www.bondigroup.com.au. 

Further information

Murray Smith
T: 02 6950 2820
M: 0427 544626
E: msmith@colyirr.com.au