

THE ROAR OF WASTE

by Ron Pike

9 February 2019

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Watching the Burdekin Falls Dam with about six metres of water going over the spillway following flood rains in the catchment, we must remember that this is not a rare occurrence.

As far back as 1875 there are records of the Burdekin River rising over 18 metres in just a few hours and repeated reports of 1 to 6 metres of water above the bridge deck at Inkerman. Records of high river flows lasting weeks and months are not uncommon. Following a cyclone in December 1974 the river remained at flood height until April 1975.

These flood flows can exceed 5 mega-litres per second (almost half a million ML every day). This is sufficient to fill our oldest irrigation storage, Burrinjuck Dam, from empty, every two days.

The roar of this cascading water is the roar of waste – wasted water that will be needed in years of little or no flow.

It is also the roar of flood water that is destroying people's lives and carrying sediment and nutrients that some say may damage the Great Barrier Reef.

We can avoid this flooding; we can store this water for later use; we can use it to produce cheap clean power and vastly increase productivity across the Burdekin Basin. With vision and planning we can use it to drought-proof much of central and western Queensland.

Why don't we do it?

Expenditure on water conservation and hydro-power returns both direct and indirect income to Government for the foreseeable future. And the jobs generated are tax-paying jobs, not taxpayer-funded jobs like those created by never-ending subsidies and targets designed to force-feed "renewable" energy in a doomed attempt to limit global warming.

Conserving flood flows in increased water storages is a win for the environment, a win for the Government and a win for regional communities.

If we want water in the droughts, we must harvest the floods.

Ron Pike.

Ron Pike was the first farmer to use irrigation water from the Snowy Scheme. He has spent decades studying the water problems of Eastern Australia and their solutions. He is the Water Watch Chairman of the Saltbush Club.
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