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DECISION TO SCRAP WATER LICENCE FEES FOR AGRICULTURE WELCOMED

Manjimup and Pemberton Landowners have welcomed a decision by Water Minister Dave Kelly to not proceed with the introduction of unfair water licence fees of \$6,668 for renewal of a water licence and \$13,057 for a new licence.

The decision by the Minister for Water follows a year-long campaign against the fees by the Manjimup and Pemberton Landowners group, who also ran a successful campaign against introduction of water licence fees in 2007 and 2008.

Manjimup and Pemberton Landowners convener, Neil Bartholomaeus said the proposed \$6,668 to renew a water licence by what is usually a simple 'rubber stamp' administrative process would have been an outrageous water tax grab.

"Thousands of family-based farmers using less than 100 megalitres of self-supply water to produce food and wine would have paid the same \$6,668 licence renewal fee as the subsidised Ord Irrigation Cooperative licenced to use 246,300 megalitres from the Ord River.

"The Manjimup and Pemberton Landowners group made a major written submission against the proposed fees and provided a template submission that was used by large and small food and wine producers.

"We are pleased Minister Kelly has responded to submissions and won't apply the costly fees to agriculture, Mr Bartholomaeus said.

Mr Bartholomaeus said while food and wine producers in Manjimup and Pemberton together were opposed to the proposed water licence fees, there is not the same togetherness on on the Southern Forests Irrigation Scheme.

"The Irrigation Scheme has divided what has been a successful self-supply water food producer community. With some landowners being denied use of water on their properties to favour the Scheme.

"Given the major environmental and economic concerns about the Southern Forests Irrigation Scheme, it is appropriate the Environmental Protection Authority recently decided the project will require the highest-level assessment as a Public Environmental Review.

"The Public Environmental Review will be the first opportunity for self-supply water users and the public to comment on the detail of the Southern Forests Irrigation Scheme, which will take water from the forested Donnelly River, Mr Bartholomaeus said.

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