

# Indi Candidates

Candidate	Replied to Email	Opposes Buybacks	Detailed Water Policy Provided	Speak Up Supported
Helen Haines - IND	NA	NA	NA	NA
Mitch Bridges - Labor Party	NA	NA	NA	NA
James Trenergy - Liberal Party	NA	NA	NA	NA
Athol Thomas - Pauline Hanson's One Nation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tim Quilty - Libertarian	NA	NA	NA	NA
Alysia Regan - Greens	NA	NA	NA	NA
Mark McFarlane - IND	NA	NA	NA	NA
Michael White - Family First	NA	NA	NA	NA
Ben Howman - Legalise Cannabis Party	NA	NA	NA	NA

## Indi Candidates Water Policy / Replies to Email

All Candidates standing for the seat of Indi were sent the following email -

*As you are aware, water policy is one of the biggest issues facing the Indi electorate, which is reliant on the prosperity of irrigated agriculture.*

*Speak Up members have asked for guidance on the water policy of the candidates for the 20205 election. Could you please send me your water policy, particularly your position on buybacks by Thursday, April 24th, to enable us to provide feedback to our members.*

*With thanks,  
Shelley Scoullar*

**Please find below the correspondence from the candidates -**

## **Athol Thomas - One Nation**

Dear Shelley,

Thank you for enquiring about One Nations water policy.

Below is our water policy as taken from our website at <https://www.onenation.org.au/water>.

### ***Introduction***

*One Nation understands that water is much more than 'just another resource'. It's the lifeblood of Australia. It's absolutely essential for our world-leading farming sector and our economically-crucial mining sector. It's essential for the natural environment, and essential for the sustainable growth of cities and regional communities.*

*One Nation seeks to deliver a comprehensive Federal water policy that supports agriculture, industry, communities and the environment. In particular, our policy has a strong focus on improving national water security – an urgent matter sorely neglected by successive Labor and Coalition governments.*

### ***National water infrastructure initiative***

*In the face of population growth and more economic development in Australia, the need for a comprehensive forward-looking national water security strategy has never been greater. Central to such a strategy is the requirement for significant public investment in water infrastructure which improves Australia's capacity to store more water, distribute it efficiently to end-users, to eliminate or minimise water waste, and ensure water is safe to consume. Australia's economic, social and environmental future depends on it.*

*Implementing this policy will include:*

- restoring water security projects like the \$5.4 billion Hells Gate Dam near Townsville;*
- upgrading existing water infrastructure to improve storage capacity;*
- investment in water-efficient distribution infrastructure in irrigation areas – primarily by rehabilitating open channel systems;*
- investment in infrastructure which promotes urban water conservation – such as stormwater and greywater treatment plants and distribution systems, and rainwater harvesting – to reduce demand on potable water supplies; and*

- *establishing a National Water Security Council – with all stakeholders fairly represented – to oversee implementation of the strategy and ensure cohesion and efficient resource allocation;*
- *eliminating unnecessary prescriptions and fees on those who collect and store water on their own land – this would include enshrining a right to establish dams with a storage capacity of up to four megalitres to capture rainfall and surface water flows on farm properties; and*
- *using legal frameworks to encourage improved waste water treatment and promote water harvesting, irrigation and residential systems that are safe for both humans and the environment.*

### ***Water reform in the Murray-Darling Basin***

*The Murray-Darling Basin supports 40% of Australia’s food and fibre production, and the potable water requirements of more than two million Australians. The Water Act 2007 and the Murray Darling Basin Plan provide the framework for water reform in the Basin, aiming to recover a total of 3200 gigitalites per year from irrigation to environmental water flows.*

*This has involved the investment of up to \$13 billion in water buybacks and infrastructure upgrades. One Nation does not support the 3200 GL/year target.*

*Water buybacks, while being the cheapest form of water recovery per megalitre, have been devastating for river and irrigation communities across the Basin. One Nation does not support the recovery of more water by this mechanism.*

*Water reform in the Basin has also involved the creation of a water trading market, effectively ‘decoupling’ water entitlements and allocations from the land where they are used. One Nation supports water trading between Australian irrigators who have land and crops or livestock which can use it, as this provides greater business flexibility for farmers in the Basin’s highly variable climate.*

*Our party does not support water trading by entities with no land (and therefore no use for water other than as a commodity) and we do not support foreign entities trading water in the Basin at all.*

*Changes made to the Water Act 2007 and the Basin Plan in 2023 by Labor and the Greens have expanded the scope of water recovery through buybacks, again threatening river communities with more job and business losses, and subsequent reductions in basic services. One Nation considers that with more than 2100 GL/year already recovered for environmental flows, enough is enough.*

*One Nation will move to reverse the changes made to the Water Act 2007 and the Basin Plan:*

- restoring the legislated 1500 GL/year cap/limit on buybacks;*
- restoring the 320 GL/year recovery target in the northern Basin; and*
- restoring the original socio-economic test for the recovery of the 450 GL/year 'Water for the Environment Special Account' introduced by the Gillard Labor Government.*

*One Nation considers that all other forms of water recovery in the Basin should be exhausted before buybacks. These options include:*

- investment in water-efficient distribution infrastructure in irrigation areas – primarily by rehabilitating open channel systems;*
- investment in research, development and extension of water-efficient farming practices, such as precision irrigation and farming systems which improve the water-holding capacity of soils; and*
- utilising other sources of water for environmental flows, such as the South-East Drainage Scheme in South Australia.*

*One Nation also seeks targeted reforms in water trading in the Basin:*

- restricting foreign ownership of water and water assets; and*
- introducing stringent transparency measures in water trading across the Basin, including a public registry of water ownership and transactions.*

### ***Water for a healthy environment***

*One Nation considers that public investment to improve the health of natural river and other water systems is critical to ensure sustainability of agriculture and the regional communities which rely on it. In principle we support community-led initiatives at the catchment level – such as wetland rehabilitation, that enhance water quality and reduce salinity problems (for example salt interception schemes) and also improve native biodiversity (for example native fish stocks) and ecological resilience in challenging conditions such as drought.*

*One Nation considers that one of the most important water sources in Australia is the Great Artesian Basin. Covering about 1.7 million square kilometres across Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and the Northern Territory and containing about 65 million gigalitres of water (130,000 times the volume of Sydney Harbour), the Great Artesian Basin is one of the world's largest groundwater basins and supports production worth almost \$13 billion per year.*

*One Nation opposes proposals to inject captured carbon dioxide waste into the Great Artesian Basin's aquifers, which carry the risk of contaminating water to the point it cannot be used by the farmers, miners and regional communities which depend on it.*

It is imperative that the Murray Darling Basin Plan is stopped as it is with no more water buybacks to occur.

The Labour government has just spent \$210 million over the past 7 weeks on water buybacks.

This is money that could have been far better spent supporting drought and flood effected farmers across Australia.

I believe that Australia's water can be suitably managed to ensure that there is balance between supporting and maintaining our food production, agriculture and environmental requirements.

I firmly believe that water should not be treated as a tradable commodity, especially by foreign investors or speculators whose primary interest is profit rather than actual water usage. Water rights must be directly linked to land ownership, ensuring that they are allocated to and tradable only among farmers who genuinely need water for their agricultural operations. This approach prevents the commodification of water and ensures it remains a resource for those who depend on it for livelihood, rather than a speculative asset.