

Drought, death and despair – a plea for help

Have you ever smelt death?

Last Friday night, I spoke to someone who has smelt death and who is haunted by it.

A local policeman came up to me and started talking about the drought.

He was clearly fearful of what the future might hold.

He feared more suicides and spoke in particular of one suicide which he had been involved with last year.

It was summer and he found the body of a local farmer after searching on foot for several hours.

He then had to sit with the farmer's body for six hours awaiting back up.

The policeman said, "I'm not crazy but I found myself talking to him, asking him questions he couldn't answer – because he was dead, because he'd blown his head off with a shotgun three days earlier because he could not longer afford to feed his cattle. Put yourself in the police man's shoes, inhaling the stench of death from the bloated body of a man who reached the depths of despair and chose to end it.

There have been over 100 drought related suicides in Victoria in the past seven years.

Things are tough and they are going to get tougher. We need help.

To the Premier, I say, "You can't make it rain but you can ease the pressure.

- "Stop the North-South Pipeline which will take our water, our life blood, to flush Melbourne's faeces into the sea.
- "Stop the decommissioning of Lake Mokoan and accept the local alternative which provides irrigators water security whilst delivering water savings.
- "Reject the ludicrous recommendations of the draft VEAC report on river red gum forests.
- "Substantially increase funding and support services to country communities.

"Please Premier, many proud people are desperate and need your help urgently."

"We are asking for a hand-up not a hand-out".