

**Submission
No 30**

**SUPPORT FOR DROUGHT AFFECTED COMMUNITIES IN NEW SOUTH
WALES**

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Having recently travelled in western NSW, visiting towns along the Darling River, I was shocked by the depressed state of the communities that once thrived along the Darling. The impacts of the drought (not the first one!) and the likely future impacts from climate change are profoundly changing the viability of these towns. Australia cannot be drought-proofed and we need to learn to live in harmony with the landscape.

A related issue is the over allocation of above & below ground water resources by large agro-industries that have been allowed to extract water before the needs of these communities has been considered fully. A national drought strategy that includes long-term planning for the health of the rivers in the Murray-Darling basin appears to be necessary and something I hope the committee will consider.

And the communities most affected by this situation are the Aboriginal communities, who are struggling with many other issues. The sad state of the rivers tears at the heart and spiritual connection Aboriginal people have with country (especially including the rivers). The proposed closure of the Brewarrina "Yetta Dhinnakkal" Centre is a retrograde decision that is likely to cost the government much in the future with the lack of occupational education & training, and increased medical expenditure with social breakdown. Many towns have minimal or inadequate medical facilities, such as Wilcannia which is in need of 8 hospital beds.

I thank the committee for taking the time to investigate the impacts of drought on regional NSW and I hope the committee will consider the above points when formulating its recommendations for action to government