

**Submission
No 17**

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON PROTECTING LOCAL WATER UTILITIES
FROM PRIVATISATION**

Organisation: Community Environment Network

Date Received: 29 October 2023



Community Environment Network Inc.

An alliance of community & environment groups.



29 October 2023

Re Joint Select Committee on Protecting Local Water Utilities from Privatisation

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please accept this submission from the Community Environment Network (CEN) in response to the invitation from the **Joint Select Committee on Protecting Local Water Utilities from Privatisation**.

The CEN is the Central Coast's peak environmental organisation. Our mission is to work for Ecologically Sustainable Development and against risks to ESD. We are a not-for-profit and a registered charitable gift recipient.

Central Coast Council (consisting of the former Gosford City Council and Wyong Shire Council) have successfully managed potable water supplies on the coast and employ solid strategic water-wise plans including levels of restriction on household consumption as required. These restrictions during very dry times are readily embraced by locals over many years as a Water-Wise Program.

The people of the Central Coast have invested much time and effort to secure water resources and would vigorously oppose any suggestion that the long term planned infrastructure and pricing framework secured over decades be privatised.

As the NSW Government would be aware the Central Coast Council resulted from the amalgamation of the two former Local Government Areas (LGA) of Gosford and Wyong. The community were never asked about amalgamation by that former Government and have had to pay a heavy price since that decision.

Central Coast Water Authority has worked effectively with Hunter Water and share a reciprocal water pipeline designed to aid each LGA with emergency supplies whenever needed.

It is encouraging to know that the NSW Government has acted to protect both the public ownership of Sydney Water and Hunter Water.

The same protection should apply to Central Coast Council's supply. Central Coast complied in 2020 with the NSW Government's requirement to implement a Central Coast Water Security Plan as part of the then Government's Integrated Water Cycle Management (IWCM) regulatory process.

The Plan was publicly integrated with extensive exhibition processes and complied with the 30 year plan that local water authorities (LWU's) were required to develop.

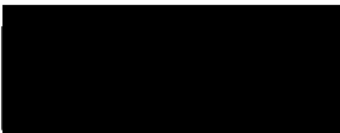
In 2012 the \$140 Million Mardi Dam to Mangrove Dam pipeline, funded by both State and Federal Governments of that time, began operation. Since that time water resources have exponentially increased the Mangrove Dam levels to 100%.

Despite the recent very dry conditions the three dams on the coast have retained a combined level of 97% capacity.

People of the Central Coast would also oppose, if suggested, that our local supply infrastructure be amalgamated within the Hunter Water Authority.

It is CEN position that privatisation of public utilities in NSW is like having a sugar fix in that there is suddenly a bucked to cash but it has long term consequences. For example, the privatisation of the power/electricity industry has particularly affected our local area and the whole of NSW with unprecedented increase in the cost of electricity and the lack of long term planning to move towards renewable energy.

Yours sincerely,



Gary Chestnut
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