

**IMPACTS OF THE WATER AMENDMENT (RESTORING OUR RIVERS) ACT
2023 ON NSW REGIONAL COMMUNITIES**

Organisation: Water for Rivers

Date Received: 14 April 2025

Regarding the Inquiry into the impacts of the Water Amendment (Restoring Our Rivers) Act 2023 on NSW regional communities Item g) any other related matter.

Clean water is life.

Yet we use our rivers, lakes and aquifers as sewers for our toxic wastes.

"Pollution, dilution, solution" is the catchcry. Yet no matter how much you dilute the poison, the same amount of poison remains. Dumping toxic wastes into rivers or lakes does not destroy the waste. It remains to poison us and all life.

Corporations and the people within them have a duty of care to future generations and their own grandchildren. Mindless behaviour is done by habit without thought of consequences.

So many of our industries produce poisons for which we have no safe disposal:

- industrial agricultural chemical fertilisers, pesticides, herbicides and fungicides that kill the soil microbiota and insects on which all life depends;
- mining and processing gold, copper, lithium and other critical elements releases acid mine drainage that poisons water;
- coal contains carcinogens released when coal and mines are flushed with water in floods, or when fracked to produce CSG, which is brought to the surface in water;
- CSG contains salt and toxins which don't break down and which are stored where they can contaminate our aquifers and run off into the Murray Darling Basin and catchments to poison our environment, communities and food production;
- conventional hydrogen production from brine also produces salt, a forever-chemical;
- Industries are not legally allowed to dump poisons into water unless they are diluted to "safe" levels. But they can be stored in sediment dams that then overflow in floods. And "safe" levels are irrelevant with forever-chemicals like salt, PFAS and 1080, which never break down but instead accumulate in soil and water sediments;
- coal fired power stations and their ash dams produces PFAS forever-chemicals which poison soil, groundwater and lakes systems and the ongoing health of the community. Pollution from coal-fired stations is associated with increased hospital admissions and deaths.
- Routine releases and accidental spills of tritium from nuclear power plants pose a growing health and safety concern. Tritium radiation is very mutagenic. Exposure to tritium has been clinically proven to cause cancer, genetic mutations and birth defects. Tritium is a radioactive hydrogen isotope that displaces ordinary hydrogen in water and makes it radioactive. This is called tritiated water. Since plants take up water and animals eat plants, tritiated water in the environment also makes food radioactive. Tritiated water is easily absorbed through the skin, lungs and gastro-intestinal tract.

We have the laws to stop this. They are not implemented. Those who police them are underfunded. Those responsible are unaccountable. We need more funding to bodies like the NSW Natural Resources Access Regulator, for monitoring.

We need to enforce the Federal Water Act and make politicians accountable for the lack of enforcement.

We need free poisons location, collection and disposal facilities.

CLEAN WATER IS LIFE. WE MUST PROTECT IT.