

Portfolio Committee No. 7 – Planning and Environment

Inquiry Into rationale for, and impacts of, new dams and other water infrastructure in NSW

Response to Questions on Notice to Tom Green and Mary Ewing, Lachlan Valley Water.

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Question: When you mentioned the options paper identifying Wyangala as the preferred option, which options paper was that?

Question: I was wondering – because this is important for what has occurred so far in relation to the Wyangala Dam wall raising proposal – whether it was possible to table on notice, Mr Green, some of the documentation you are referring to in relation to those options?

Answer: Attached is a presentation given to the Customer Reference Group and Community Reference Group for the Lachlan Valley Water Security Project in 2017.

- Slide 20 refers to the dam safety upgrade needed at Wyangala to provide acceptable flood capacity, and estimates the cost at approximately \$200 million
- Slide 26 refers to the Wyangala Dam project contributing materially to the ‘step change’ in water security, drought security and flood management capability
- Slide 30 indicates that raising Wyangala Dam scored best of the dam solutions in the strategic assessment

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Question: The first was your comments regarding flood management and particularly talking about what had happened in 2016-17 and what happened once the inflows came in – and for obvious reasons – when the Newell Highway was closed for 42 days and so on. Could you speak to what the broader impacts of the flooding were?

Answer: Attached in the NSW Government’s Regional Recovery Co-ordinators Report about the flooding.

- P 5 states that the Newell Highway was closed for 43 days, with major impacts to local and state economies.
- P17 lists 1,316,316 ha of crops damaged, with a total value of \$740,000,000. Also 285,408 ha pasture with a total value of \$42.8 million, and 2918 km fencing with a total value of \$29 million. (This relates to the whole area covered by the report, not just the Lachlan)
- P 18 estimates the damage to agriculture in the Central West as being \$528,450,000 , and to roads at \$46,000,000. The report does not provide a breakdown of what proportion of the damage to agriculture in the Central West was to the Lachlan and what proportion was to the Macquarie, but if it was 50% roughly to each region, that means that agriculture in the Lachlan suffered damage of \$260,000,000 from the 2016 flood year.

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Question: The Jemalong Plan obviously has a lot of opportunities for people to really deal with efficiency issues. Whether the dam wall went ahead or not, this would be an improvement would it not?

Answer: Jemalong's three proposals to the Private Irrigation Infrastructure Operators Program included savings that could be achieved through rationalisation of some channels, in-system modernisation to improve efficiency and some options for buyback.

As these projects were not funded, Jemalong Irrigation Ltd has since undertaken some in-system modifications, and they continue to investigate options to improve efficiency of delivery within Jemalong, but it should be recognised that these options can only manage the water that is made available through the allocation process, they do not have an impact on the underlying high variability in the availability of water for licence holders in the Lachlan system.

In addition, individual farmers within the Jemalong Irrigation district are also carrying out their own on-farm efficiency projects, but again, these do not change the reliability factor.

Attached:

Lachlan Valley Water Security Project, Overview of Preliminary Business Case, October 2017. Presentation for Customer Reference Group and Community Reference Group meetings, October 2017. WaterNSW.

Regional Recovery Co-ordinator Report, September 2016 NSW Inland Flooding. NSW Government, Justice.