

Submission  
No 45

## INQUIRY INTO A SUSTAINABLE WATER SUPPLY FOR SYDNEY

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**Subject:**

**Summary**

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**SUBMISSION FOR INQUIRY INTO A SUSTAINABLE WATER SUPPLY FOR  
SYDNEY (NSW Parliamentary General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5)**

**ALL OPTIONS TO BE EXPLORED**

It is vital that any inquiry into a "sustainable" water supply for Sydney should be conducted in the broadest possible terms. All options should be considered and evaluated as objectively as possible. There should be no attempt to indulge in "political correctness", avoiding discussing facets merely because they may be unpopular with politicians, the public service or the public.

It cannot be said that this has been the approach so far. A glaring example is that the public documents disseminated by Sydney Water with regard to desalination do not mention the most obvious option – additional water storage.

The best inquiries by the author have resulted in the following comparative results:

<b>Augmentation Type</b>	<b>Capital Cost(\$million)</b>	<b>Operating Costs \$million per annum</b>	<b>Tonnes CO2 per annum</b>
Welcome Reef Dam	141	5	27,257
Recycling	2845	140	540,000
Seawater Desalination	2000	86	950,000

This rough assessment is based on:

1. Water Board Water Supply Strategy Review Draft August 1991
2. SydneyWater Metropolitan Water Plan Seawater Desalination fact sheets, 2005

This comparison indicates that from the perspective of each of the capital cost, operating cost and environmental "greenhouse" the augmentation of the Welcome Reef Dam is by far the superior option.

Further, there must be many other additional storage possibilities. Sydney is in a high rainfall area and the presence of nearby mountains with deep ravines must produce many attractive opportunities that should be explored. It should be questioned whether it makes sense to develop energy intensive alternatives and at the same time allow most of rainfall to rush uselessly into the sea.

The author does not maintain that additional storage is necessarily a solution to Sydney's additional water supply needs, or part of the solution but makes the point that every option must be explored. This has not been the case so far.

All environmental implications of each option should be specified. For example the positive implications of recapturing nutrients from recycling (such as phosphorus, of which concentrated supplies are predicted to become scarce) should be considered.

Only once all options have been fully and publically described should decisions be made. Only at that stage, in the light of all the facts, should the popularity or otherwise of any option be allowed to influence the final decision.

#### BROADER FACTORS

Sydney's infrastructure related problems appear to have one basic cause. The city appears to have exceeded its optimum population size for efficient functioning for providing our expected quality of life within its physical constraints. Anyone who is serious about sustainability must consider that any gains made in per capita sustainability at the individual level will be swiftly overtaken if the population increases. Population increases make additional demands on the environment due to increasing numbers and the requirement of extra people for an improved standard of living.

The potential future growth of Sydney must be diverted elsewhere. Unless this diversion of growth occurs one limitation after another will present itself and future lifestyles will continue to deteriorate.

Most countries of the world do not rely on just one major city. Attempts could be made to stimulate development more equitably over the whole state by enticing people to more remote locations. The New South Wales Government should

request the Commonwealth Government to take some responsibility for new arrivals that result from its policies. The Commonwealth should not be allowed to assume, as it does now, that the States can forever shoehorn immigrants into existing communities. The Commonwealth should be requested to provide funds to cater for the necessary infrastructure and employment required to promote acceptable decentralised development across the nation. It should also be requested to provide workable incentives such as income tax concessions for those who set up a business or work in these areas.

Tony Recsei

President