

**Submission  
No 18**

## **INQUIRY INTO ADEQUACY OF WATER STORAGES IN NSW**

**Organisation:** Total Environment Centre

**Date received:** 3/08/2012

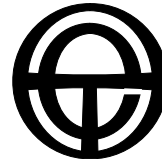
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31 July 2012

Standing Committee on State Development  
Parliament House  
Sydney 2000

Dear Sir/Madam

Total Environment Centre (TEC) wishes to respond to the invitation for submissions to the inquiry into the adequacy of water storages in NSW. TEC is disturbed by the lack of any reference to sustainable water management in the terms of reference (TOR) an apparent presumption toward the need to investigate new water storages and supply augmentation. We are also disturbed by the lack of any reference to water recycling or demand management. We strongly believe that the emphasis of the inquiry should be on improving sustainable water management and the efficiency of water use in NSW. We offer the following comments in relation to issues raised in the TOR.

The capacity of existing water storage to meet agricultural, urban, industrial and environmental needs

TEC believes that current storages are adequate to meet the above demands. The key issue should be more efficient use of current water resources i.e. investment in recycling for industrial and agricultural use, more efficient production processes, capping and piping of irrigation networks, improved demand management and reform of pricing structures to reward water efficiency and encourage investment in water efficiency.

Storage management principles to optimise water supply to the agricultural, urban industrial and environmental sectors

TEC strongly believes that water storages should be operated in a manner that is consistent with the maintenance of health aquatic ecosystems. In particular timing of environmental flows and other releases should mimic natural patterns. Care should be taken to minimise the effects of thermal pollution through construction and operation of variable off-takes.

Proposals for the construction and/ or augmentation of water storages in NSW with regard to storage efficiency, engineering feasibility, safety, community support and cost benefit

TEC opposes the construction of new dams or augmentation of existing dams in NSW. We draw the Committee's attention to the Water Management Act 2000, which places priority on the protection or restoration of water dependent ecosystems as well as protecting, preserving, maintaining or enhancing the important river flow dependent ecosystems of the catchment's water sources. As

detailed above, recycling, water use efficiencies and demand management should be the focus of the Committee's attention.

The now abandoned Tillegra Dam proposal provides an informative example of outmoded thinking on water supplies and dam construction. Ultimately rejected on planning grounds, including unacceptable environmental impacts and lack of demonstrated need for such supply augmentation, Tillegra Dam was proposed to by Hunter Water Corporation as a water supply option for the lower Hunter. Analysis by *Institute for Sustainable Futures* (ISF) found that by implementing water conservation and demand management programs, similar to those currently in place in Sydney, all future water needs of the Lower Hunter region can be adequately met for, at least, the next 40 years. This alternative analysis maintains acceptable levels of water security without requiring new dams, while still accounting for the high-end prediction of population growth in the Lower Hunter region.

Despite the rejection of Tillegra dam on the grounds of unacceptable environmental impact and lack of demonstrated need for its construction, Hunter Water is now actively pursuing an alternative proposal (Native Dog Creek Dam) located only 700 metres from the proposed Tillegra site. It is clear that Native Dog Creek would have similar environmental impacts to Tillegra Dam and is not required for the same reasons that Tillegra Dam was not required to meet water demand in the lower Hunter.

TEC urges the Committee to adopt a broader outlook, beyond the narrow TOR for the inquiry and to promote sustainable options for more efficient and sustainable use of existing water resources.

Yours sincerely,

Leigh Martin  
Water Campaigner