

**INQUIRY INTO THE CONTINUED PUBLIC OWNERSHIP
OF SNOWY HYDRO LIMITED**

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Theme:

Summary

PJG:TC/W-6

Paul Goodsall

26th June, 2006

The Director
Inquiry into the Continued Public
Ownership of Snowy Hydro Limited
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Director,

On behalf of Murrumbidgee Shire Council I would like to submit the following points in relation to the Inquiry into the Continued Public Ownership of Snowy Hydro Limited for your consideration.

In February, 1959, the Department of Local Government prepared for the Blowering Dam Investigations Committee a report presenting data relating to the extent and nature of the urban development required in the proposed extensions to the Irrigation areas in south-western New South Wales.

The main recommendation stemming from this report was that "a town of ultimate population of between 4,500 and 5,000 should be established in the Coleambally area because only a town of this size can offer a fully satisfactory range of trades services and other facilities for present day rural population." This recommendation was "based" wholly on the ultimate situation as outlined by the Blowering Dam Committees report, i.e. a development of a little over 1,000 properties and the subsequent rural population of about 5,000 persons in the Coleambally area.

In March, 1964 the Murrumbidgee Shire Council, acting upon advice from the Department of Local Government and upon the recommendations of the 1959 report, commissioned Clarke, Gazzard and Associates to prepare a town plan for a new town in the Coleambally Irrigation Area.

Later at the request of the Department of Local Government this brief was included the Local Environmental Plan for the Shire of Murrumbidgee.

At the opening of the Gogelderie Weir in 1959, Premier Joe Cahill spelt out the development that was to result from the Snowy of 1,100 large area and 200 horticultural farms.

The Minister for Conservation, The Hon. George Enticknap fully supported and promoted the Coleambally scheme and assisted the Murrumbidgee Shire in many ways to obtain the land and develop the town of Coleambally.

At the opening of Coleambally on 28th June, 1968 when eleven State and Federal politicians were present the then Minister for Water Conservation, The Hon. Jack Beale stated that due to a recision of the available water to come from the system the number of farms had been reduced to 570.

The Member for Murrumbidgee, The Hon. Al Grasby challenged the need for this.

The Federal Government was represented by The Hon. David Fairburn who maintained the Federal Government's support for the Coleambally Scheme.

At the opening of Blowering Dam and the first release of water the Premier, The Hon. Robert Askin reiterated the Government's support of the Coleambally scheme and the use of Snowy water for irrigation.

Subsequently, the Minister for Water Resources, The Hon. Lin Gordon, promoted and assisted Coleambally by building Departmental offices and numerous houses in Coleambally.

From the time of the first releases of farms in 1959-1960 settlers have come to the Coleambally Irrigation Area on the understanding that successive New South Wales State Governments would continue to honour these promises.

During latter stages of the construction of the Snowy Scheme the Chief Commissioner Sir William Hudson visited Coleambally stating "The lasting benefits of the Snowy Mountains Scheme will be the watering of the parched inland".

Murrumbidgee Shire has continued to fulfil its part of the bargain by developing the town of Coleambally and the surrounding irrigation area.

However, the restriction on the number of farms has meant a much lower urban/rural population. In the areas of health, education, commerce, trades and services there has been significant achievements but these are now being maintained with difficulty.

Irrigation development has been encouraged throughout the Shire to enhance the scheme along the Murrumbidgee River and by using groundwater. However, any reduction in the bulk allocation to the Lower Murrumbidgee would have a drastic socio-economic effect on the Murrumbidgee Shire.

The original undertakings were during the era of the Snowy Mountains Authority. When it was incorporated people were given certain guarantees regarding irrigation releases.

The Murrumbidgee Shire and the Coleambally community have continued to develop and progress on the basis that the scheme had the backing and endorsement of the New South Wales State Governments and that Blowering water was guaranteed.

Council is totally opposed to the sale of Snowy Hydro in any form that does not guarantee continued water allocations in the current form. The investment by local farmers in Murrumbidgee Shire and other irrigation areas, in developing land to provide for irrigation, and in recent years to provide for efficiencies in water use, should not be jeopardised in any way by such a sale. Also the investment by Council and business owners should also be recognised.

Yours faithfully

Paul Goodsall
General Manager