

**Submission
No 59**

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

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Submission for Inquiry into adequacy of water storages in NSW

Hello, we are a family of four who live on 100 acres of bush in the beautiful Hunter Valley. We have been part of the local community who successfully opposed the building of a new dam at Tillegra. We are concerned about suggestions of another dam being built in our area. We do not wish for another dam. We wish to see a more sustainable, holistic, diversified approach to water management in the hunter region. This is also the view of all of those we discuss this with.

We would like to see the precautionary principal applied before any consideration of a dam. The impact of a dam on our river system is not known.

We cannot take the risk.

a) The capacity of existing water storages to meet agricultural, urban, industrial and environmental needs

This term needs to be considered from another angle, the ability of agricultural, urban, industrial and environmental water needs to be reduced, reducing the requirement for the extent of increase in capacity. Permanent 'water wise' rules throughout most Australian cities and surveys around the country have shown that low-level water restrictions have very high levels of community support, making solutions such as dams unnecessary. Industries should be encouraged to use recycled water not potable water. Major water users should be encouraged to create and adhere to a water conservation plan. With climate change there is an over reliance on rainfall dependent storage systems.

b) Models for determining water requirements for the agricultural, urban, industrial and environmental sectors

We would like to see thorough modelling which is undertaken by an independent body or at least presented to for assessment by an independent body. The previous modelling

undertaken by Hunter Water was found by other scholars to be lacking in a relevant modelling method. The modelling should take into account methods of water collection and management of the future, using a forward thinking model. Dams to me are an old way of approaching the need for water collection and management. We need new models which involve diverse water collection methods, localised collection and use, and education and reduction of water use.

c) Storage management practices to optimise water supply to the agricultural, urban, industrial and environmental sectors

These could involve more, but smaller, localised storage methods. Water conservation and demand management strategies are often more cost effective, socially, economically and environmentally. Community and stakeholder consultation has shown that consumers/industry's are prepared to accept water conservations measures and demand management in lieu of large dams.

d) 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.

These key terms of reference highlight many of our concerns regarding dams. They may be able to store a lot of water in one place but this seems so detrimental to engineering feasibility (huge infrastructure required), safety (building risks, risk for those living downstream, flood risk such as Brisbane, risk for health of river), community support (the proposal for a dam in the hunter region lost the government it's seat. There is NO community support for another dam in our area) and cost benefit (huge cost for a dam, little financial reward as large infrastructures such as dams can inflict a large financial burden on water rates payers, as well as a debt burden on a State owned enterprise).

e) Water storages and management practices in other Australian and international jurisdictions.

We would like to see employment of best practice international water storage and management practices applied to water in NSW, especially regarding examples of alternatives to dams. Future water supply planning should adopt the National Urban Water Planning Principles and adhere to the NSW State Plan (2010) which determines that we must “Protect our native vegetation, biodiversity, land, rivers and coastal waterways, state-wide targets for natural resource management to improve biodiversity and native vegetation, sensitive riverine and coastal ecosystems, soil condition and socio-economic wellbeing”. Dams are contrary 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.

f) Any other matter relating to the adequacy of water storages in NSW.

Here are some of our other concerns about dams:

- Dams have detrimental impact on rivers – both physical and biological, by altering the rivers natural flow thus effecting ecosystems, which can led to the extinction of many fish and other aquatic species, the disappearance of birds in floodplains, huge losses of forest, wetland and farmland, erosion of coastal deltas, and many other immitigable impacts.
- Dams emit green house gases ; some in large quantities

Thank you for your time and good luck with your inquiry,

Josephine, Samuel, Jaida and Lucia New.