

INQUIRY INTO ADEQUACY OF WATER STORAGES IN NSW

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State Development - Submission for Inquiry into Adequacy of Water Storages in NSW

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Subject: Submission for Inquiry into Adequacy of Water Storages in NSW

To the Inquiry

The provision of a secure water supply for domestic, agricultural and industrial use is one of the most important utilities a government must be able to ensure. Water is one of the most basic needs of a society. Consequently it is pleasing to see that the NSW State Government has set up this inquiry and is giving us, the community, a chance to make submissions.

It is disappointing that this inquiry seems to focus on storage and augmentation, at the exclusion of recycling and water conservation. This is a great opportunity lost for investigation into the future of water supply technologies. All the evidence shows that water storage as in dams is outdated, environmentally expensive and often socially expensive if communities are disrupted. Future augmentation should only be seen as an absolute last resort after all other options have been considered. Options that are cheaper and less damaging in every way to our way of life.

I draw your attention to a recent article in the Newcastle Herald by Mr Terry Leckie from the Water Factory Company. He argues that decentralised water networks that use recycling technologies are favoured by developers because they reduce costs to developers, speed up land releases and add value to properties. A decentralised water supply also reduces water supply infrastructure costs and reduces demand on mains water supplies.

1. Terms of Reference b)

This surely is the first action that should be taken. Water supply is about a demand/supply balance. Proper models must be used to determine the current and future demand. These models must be set up with an open mind and taking into account changes in demand. All the figures show that demand per capita is falling as people become more aware of the importance of water conservation, as water saving regulations are implemented, as irrigation practices change and as industry increasingly uses recycled water.

Models must be flexible and able to take into account rapidly advancing technology in irrigation and recycling.

2. Terms of Reference a)

The capacity of existing water storages to meet demand can only be accurately measured if all other options are included. It does not make sense to single out water storage as the only means of water supply.

3. Terms of Reference d)

It would be preferable to be investigating proposals for recycling and water conservation measures. There is increasing evidence to show that these practices are superior in every way to constructing water storages. The World Commissions on Dams has shown the negative impacts of dams. It would be advisable for this inquiry to investigate the proposals put forward by this Commission.

I have no comments on the other terms of reference. That safe management of water storages is vital was illustrated by the Queensland floods and the role of releases of water from dams. The fact that Wivenhoe dam managers apparently got it wrong is a good argument against building any more dams.

If this inquiry does not look into all options for securing water supply it will be everybody's time wasted. Please look to the future.

Sally Corbett