

**Submission  
No 39**

## **INQUIRY INTO WATER AUGMENTATION**

**Organisation:** Daroo Orange Urban Landcare Group  
**Date received:** 10 August 2016

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DAROO

Orange Urban Landcare Group

PO Box 1127  
ORANGE NSW 2800  
10th August 2016

**NSW Upper House Inquiry into Water Augmentation**  
**Re: Proposal for a dam on the Belubula River, south of Blayney, NSW.**

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry.

Daroo Orange Urban Landcare Group was formed in 2002 with the aim of protecting and caring for areas of bushland or remnant vegetation in the urban area of Orange. With the support of government and non-government grants the group is presently caring for an Ecologically Endangered Community on Crown land containing remnant vegetation.

Among the objectives of our Landcare group are to lobby all levels of government for sustainable planning; work together to reduce land and water degradation; and develop sustainable land use within our surrounding environment.

We wish to make the following points in regards to the terms of reference for the inquiry into Water Augmentation, dealing specifically with Cliefden Caves, located on the Belubula River south-west of our city of Orange.

- The site of Cliefden Caves is unique. It contains internationally significant Ordovician fossils, limestone caves, a warm spring, habitat for threatened bat species and historic cultural sites.
- The proposed site would impact severely on the environmental, geological and cultural heritage values of the Belubula River valley.
- We believe such a dam built at the Cranky Rock site the water level at Needles Gap would be raised by up to 50 metres, i.e. more than 380m. ASL, inevitably flooding Cliefden Caves.
- Cliefden Caves contains 450 million year-old invertebrate fossils which have long been recognised as examples of Australian palaeontological heritage. to highlight their importance more than 60 scientific papers have been published in a variety of journals, documenting 191 genera and 263 species

of fossils. Many of these would be threatened by flooding of this palaeontological reference site.

- Another unique feature is the warm thermal spring (rising from Paleozoic rock, not the Great Artesian Basin), making it rare in New South Wales. This limestone cave also holds important records of past environments in cave sediment deposits.
- Another grave concern to us is the state of the Belubula River which is already dammed at at least three locations upstream of the proposed site. The Belubula River ran dry in the last great drought, as too did the Lachlan River system. Such stress if another dam were built would not be sustainable into the future. It would also jeopardise the survival of the Ramsar Convention protected wetlands along and at the end of the Lachlan River, the Booligal Wetlands and Great Cumbungi Swamp.

Our group is specifically focused on sections 1, b) and 1. f). We believe building a dam on the Belubula River as proposed will have irreversible social, economic and environment impacts on :

- i) the Cliefden Caves, their fossils, the thermal spring, its geodiversity and cultural heritage values;
- ii) such flooding would permanently alter and destroy the fragile fossil deposits and result in no further research on them;
- iii) historical & cultural values that include Cliefden being the first discovered limestone deposit in mainland Australia, early nineteenth ruins built by the first landholders in Central Western NSW, and the precious Indigenous sites in the area;
- iv) any dam will reduce downstream flows with consequences of such effect on the ecology of this river, downstream users of the Lachlan system and the important Lachlan River wetlands;

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#### Conclusion

The environmental impacts a new dam would have on the Belubula River need careful consideration. We have shown our many concerns and now are therefore opposed to such a proposal. In fact we must submit in the strongest terms that the Inquiry reject the proposal for any future dam on the Belubula River. We urge the inquiry to examine other options for Water Augmentation to dam building.

Yours sincerely

Daroo Orange Urban Landcare Group