

Submission
No 47

INQUIRY INTO WATER AUGMENTATION

Organisation: Macquarie River Food & Fibre

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Inquiry into the augmentation of water supply for rural and regional New South Wales

Macquarie River Food and Fibre

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Prepared for the Legislative Council General Purpose

Standing Committee No. 5

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About MRFF

Macquarie River Food and Fibre represents the interests of over 500 irrigated food and fibre producers in the Macquarie Valley. Our membership comprises:

- Water Access Licence holders in the Macquarie regulated river system, including both riparian irrigators and the individual members of the valley's off-river irrigation schemes; and
- Aquifer Access Licence holders in the Lower Macquarie Groundwater Sources.

MRFF is supported by a number of associated local businesses and service providers.

MRFF is a member of the NSW and National Irrigators' Councils.

About this Submission

This document has been prepared for the Legislative Council General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 which was established to inquire into and report on any matters regarding the expenditure, performance or effectiveness of any Government department, statutory body or corporation within the following portfolios:

- Industry, Resources and Energy;
- Primary Industries;
- Lands and Water;
- Environment; and
- Heritage.

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Macquarie River Food and Fibre (MRFF) represents the interests of over 500 irrigated farming families in the Macquarie Valley in central west NSW. We exist in support of our members' vision for an efficient, productive and profitable irrigation industry in the Macquarie Valley.
- 1.2 MRFF welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the Legislative Council General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 on their *Inquiry into the augmentation of water supply for rural and regional New South Wales*.
- 1.3 MRFF notes that while our submission is provided on behalf of irrigated food and fibre producers in the Macquarie regulated river system, our individual members may wish to provide their own submissions.

2. GENERAL COMMENTS

- 2.1 Like most inland regions of NSW, the regional economy and local communities of the Macquarie Valley are heavily reliant on agriculture.
- 2.2 Access to a reliable water supply for irrigation, from both groundwater and surface water resources, is a key contributor to diversity and prosperity of agriculture in the Macquarie Valley.
- 2.3 For decades water reform in the Macquarie has eroded irrigator's reliability which in turn has impacted on water security. This combined with a period of below average inflows to the valley's major water storages, has resulted in a marked decline in the level of irrigated agricultural production in recent years.
- 2.4 An efficient, productive and profitable irrigation industry in the Macquarie Valley will:
 - Improve regional diversity and drought preparedness;
 - Increase the contribution of agriculture to our regional economy and local communities;
 - Drive private sector investment in research and development;
 - Ensure investment in our natural resource base; and
 - Attract the next generation of farmers and agricultural service providers.
- 2.5 The recommendations in this submission derive benefits for all water users within the Macquarie Valley including environmental water users and local producers.

- 2.6 In turn benefits would be realised for the regions communities through improved social and economic outcomes.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Increasing supply capacity at Burrendong Dam

- 3.1 A unique opportunity exists to expand the supply capacity of the region's major water storage, Burrendong Dam, at no cost to government.
- 3.2 The total storage capacity of Burrendong Dam is 1,678,000 Megalitres with only 1,188,000 Megalitres currently available for bulk water storage. The remaining capacity (490,000 Megalitres) is designated and operated for flood mitigation purposes.
- 3.3 Opportunity exists to review the current operating rules to maximise the potential of the existing storage infrastructure and improve the reliability of access for downstream towns, stock and domestic users, irrigators and environmental water users, while still providing the important flood mitigation role.
- 3.4 The review of the current operating rules for Burrendong Dam should take account of recent dam safety upgrade works, and advancements in forecasting and gauging technology since the completion of the dam in 1967.
- 3.5 Increasing supply capacity at Burrendong Dam should also be considered in conjunction with constructing re-regulating capacity, or enroute storage, in the Macquarie river system.

Constructing an en-route storage in the Macquarie river system

- 3.6 A range of options have been considered for increasing storage and delivery efficiency in the Macquarie regulated rivers for the benefit of water users and the environment.
- 3.7 A report commission by State Water Corporation in 2009 considered possible water savings in the Lachlan, Gwydir and Macquarie river systems.
- 3.8 The SKM report (available [here](#)) found that constructing an en-route storage in the Macquarie River system would greatly assist in reducing system delivery losses, with water savings offsetting the costs of constructing the storage structure.
- 3.9 Advancing this project will require support and possible joint funding from the irrigation industry, Local Government, and Federal and NSW Government water holders and regulators.

4. FURTHER INFORMATION

MRFF thanks the Legislative Council General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 for the opportunity to provide a submission on the *Inquiry into the augmentation of water supply for rural and regional New South Wales*.

Please get in touch if you require further information or clarification on any of the comments or recommendations in this submission.

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