

**Submission  
No 63**

## **INQUIRY INTO WATER AUGMENTATION**

**Organisation:** Environmentally Concerned Citizens of Orange  
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**Upper House Enquiry into Water Augmentation**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am lodging this submission on behalf of Environmentally Concerned Citizens of Orange (ECCO). We are a not for profit local environmental organisation, founded in 2006. A major objective of our organisation is that of environmental advocacy. It is with this objective in mind that we submit the following.

ECCO's principle concerns specifically focus on the sections 1.b) and 1.f) of the terms of reference, concerning the NSW Government's proposal to build a dam on the Belubula River, the consequence of which will be the flooding of the Belabula valley and the irreversible environmental impacts flowing there from.

ECCO would like to take the opportunity provided by this enquiry to express our opposition to the proposal to establish a dam on the Belabula River at one of two sites currently under consideration. Both sites are considered by environmentalists and those with speleological expertise to be disastrous for the environmental integrity of the Belabula River Valley and especially for that of the Cliefden Caves system.

- ⤴ It is well known within caving and scientific circles that the Cliefden Caves system contains geophysical treasures that are considered unique. In addition most of the natural features contributing to this uniqueness are in pristine condition., thus preserving valuable scientific information of past millennia through sediment deposits and through 450 million year old invertebrate fossils . This can all be lost if the proposed dam were to proceed., as inundation of the system would be inevitable.
- ⤴ The management of the Belubula River involves managing its ecology as well as considering its extractive value. The Belubula is a tributary of the Lachlan River, itself also dammed. The Lachlan river system provides water to nationally recognised wetlands such as the Booligal wetlands and the Great Cumbung swamp. These provide habitat and sustenance for migratory birds. The result of further damming of the Belabula would mean less water in a wetland landscape already stressed by over allocation.
- ⤴ The Belabula already has dams established at Carcoar , Lake Rowlands and at the Cadia Valley Mine Operations.. The establishment of another dam is unnecessary and will contribute to an already stressed system.
- ⤴ It was amply demonstrated during the millennium drought that the Belabula and the Lachlan river is subject to very low, and at some times non existent flows. The establishment of a further upstream dam would further exacerbate low flows downstream, thus providing increased stress on both the riverine environment and access by downstream water users.

- ⤴ There have been suggestions that the dam proposals are concerned with providing water for the expansion of the mining industry in the region. It is not good management to consider water infrastructure where the needs of a short term unsustainable activity such as mining is given priority over the environment and agriculture.

**Conclusion**

ECCO would strongly recommend that the Inquiry reject the proposal for any future dam on the Belubula river. It is already extensively dammed. Any activity of the scale proposed would result in the inundation of Cliefden Caves which is a national treasure of geophysical and palaeontological significance in pristine condition Any further damming of the river system will result in its further degradation., putting at risk the ecology and habitat of important riverine and wetland environments. Damming will also impact on the access to water for downstream water users.

Dams are costly, take a long time to build, have negative impacts on the environment and are generally regarded as last century's technology. We need to concentrate on more sustainable environmentally appropriate methods of managing our water.

Nick King  
President  
Environmentally Concerned Citizens of Orange