

**Submission
No 117**

INQUIRY INTO WATER AUGMENTATION

Name: Mr Chris Magner

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Hello Thomas,

I have read as much as I could over the last few days about what has already been put to the Inquiry. It seems that I somehow missed finding out that it was happening and therefore missed the deadline for submissions. From what I have heard I am far from the only one who is in that situation. However the NSW Irrigators Council did make a submission and has also recently been asked to make comment on the management of the recent North Coast floods and I have been able to have some input on their response to that request.

There are a few issues that don't seem to have been addressed or have been poorly covered.

1. Water Sharing Plan for the Richmond.
2. Floodplain Management.
3. Gauges.
4. Toonumbar dam.
5. Dam linking

1. The Water Sharing Plan for the Richmond is soon to be reviewed. There are several things that could be addressed in the review that will make a difference to water security in the area, including Trading Zones, Floodplain Harvesting and Harvestable Rights. Trading Zones need to be altered considerably to allow more opportunity for trading within similar sub-catchments. If we remain as is trading will continue to be very limited. There needs to be encouragement to store and use excess water that would otherwise be wasted. Currently on the eastern side of the Great Dividing Range rules do not allow for Floodplain Harvesting (that is the capture of overland flow of water). If this was changed agriculture in this high rainfall area without stream access could, in time of low rainfall, be made more sustainable by having been able to harvest and store excess water when it was available. This usage could then be licenced, however there is currently an embargo on the issue of new licences in NSW- which is a nonsense in this high rainfall area. A review into coastal Harvestable Rights was implemented by Minister Blair but has stalled due to staff redundancies. Currently there is a 10% Harvestable Right and the review was to assess if this could be increased, possibly to 30% on the coast. A 10% Harvestable Right means that 10% of the deemed runoff of rain that falls on a property can be captured and stored in dams on farm and used unlicensed. This review needs to be completed.
2. For many years there was a Richmond Floodplain Management Committee, of which I was a member. It oversaw planning and strategy development for the management of drainage and flood mitigation of the Floodplain, this body no longer exists and nothing has taken its place. There needs to be coordinated management of facilities already in place such as drains, floodgates etc, for riparian protection and water quality monitoring and there needs to be funding to allow this to happen. The channel from the Richmond River to the Evans River was originally constructed to allow reduction of Richmond river flows during floods by diverting some water to the Evans river. For many years a Fabridam was in place which allowed diversion of flows in flood time and not during dry times. Due to vandalism and failure of this structure it was replaced by a concrete weir which allows diversion of some flow during major floods but doesn't allow unrestricted diversion, thus retaining more water on the floodplain and increasing the likelihood of blackwater events in the Richmond river. An alternate system, which will allow a more effective flow in flood times, needs to be investigated.
3. If electronic monitoring of rainfall and river flows is to be the only accepted information source for both drought and flood purposes then many more gauges are needed. The

majority of beneficiaries of the information provided by such gauges are not irrigators and therefore irrigators should not be asked to fund the gauges.

The Richmond catchment is made up of three major streams – Wilsons, Richmond and Bungawalbin. Wilsons is reasonably well provided for as far as gauges, Richmond has few and Bungawalbin gauges are inadequate. The Bureau of Meteorology site shows locations of gauges.

4. Toonumbar dam was built for agricultural purposes, however riparian rights water users have greatly increased in number and water usage over time. This can effect water available to those licenced users below them. The town of Casino also benefits from water releases from Toonumbar, especially during dry periods. There is currently an investigation by Water NSW into alternative uses of Toonumbar water, including industrial, hydroelectric, recreational and town water as well as looking at new types of agricultural use. There is also consideration of development of the land around the dam for tourism.
5. The Queensland Government has linked its southern dams by pipelines to give added water security in times of drought. The NSW Government should consider a similar scheme.

These are some issues that I believe need consideration by the inquiry.

Yours sincerely
Chris Magner