

**Submission
No 9**

**INQUIRY INTO RATIONALE FOR, AND IMPACTS OF,
NEW DAMS AND OTHER WATER INFRASTRUCTURE IN
NSW**

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No Transparency

Dams are being rushed through without due process. Business cases, Environmental Impact Studies (EIS) and hydrological reports are incomplete or not publicly available and or not even commenced.

For example, the Wyangala Dam EIS only considers the area project not the environmental impacts downstream. The Darling River Western weirs project has no EIS.

Many affected communities are deeply opposed to the projects and their concerns are being ignored to date. Construction will begin on some projects before public consultation is complete.

Expensive and unjustified

Many new dams are economically irresponsible. The full cost for many projects is unknown as business cases are lacking, but the total bill will be in the hundreds of millions. The Wyangala dam expansion is estimated at \$650 million with a long term average yield of 21 gigalitres, up to 30 times the price of water on the water market. The business cases and hydrological modelling reports for Wyangala and Dungowan dams have not been made publicly available.

Dams will damage tourism industries, downstream graziers and small irrigators. Many projects have no allocation to high security town water despite being pushed through as critical human need. There does not appear to be a feasibility study for Wyangala and Dungowan dams.

The full cost of the Macquarie re-regulating weir is unknown, changes to credit allocations would improve water security without the need for new infrastructure.

Destruction of Sacred Sites and Aboriginal Culture

There are 40 Indigenous nations in the Murray Darling Basin, all projects take place on sacred land where sovereignty was never ceded.

Registered Aboriginal sacred sites will be destroyed at many project locations.

All land is sacred, changes to hydrology, landscape and country without free, prior and informed consent from Traditional Owners is an act of ongoing colonisation.

It is yet to be known if new dam projects comply with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984.

Environmental Impact

The new dam projects will stop up to 770 GL of water from flowing downstream to RAMSAR wetlands, lakes and floodplains that provide habitat for migratory birds, native fish, turtles, frogs and other endangered species.

Reduced flows impact river connectivity and water quality, which is vital for the movement of native fish.

New dams inundate river channels that are not meant to be permanently flooded, killing centuries old river red gums and damaging habitat for small fish, insects and invertebrates.

Environmental Impact Studies do not account for downstream impacts.

Potentially Unlawful

These projects will undermine the outcomes that the Murray-Darling Basin Plan is trying to achieve.

The Menindee Lakes and Yanco Creek projects are possibly unlawful under the Federal Water Act 2007.

Some funding approvals may breach Government funding guidelines. For example, the Wyangala dam is partly funded by the Commonwealth Regional Investment Corporation. A loan of up to \$300 million has been announced, but it hasn't been approved.