

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

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Partially  
Confidential

There has not been a new dam built in NSW since 1987, but after the 2019 election, proposals for new water infrastructure have popped up right across NSW.

The Murray-Darling Basin is in critical condition. In recent years there has too little water flowing through the system to maintain the environment, communities or supply family owned agriculture.

Dams don't make water, they take it from one place and store it in another.

Rushing through big projects without proper scrutiny presents a huge risk to environment, Aboriginal culture and way of life right across the Basin, and impacts every person who lives in Australia.

The inquiry should look at the reasons for and impact of these major water infrastructure project.

New Water Infrastructure includes:

Wyangala Dam Wall Raising

Mole River Dam

Dungowan Dam

Macquarie Re-Regulating Weir

Darling Rivers Western Weir Projects including changes to Menindee Lakes

There is no transparency in the procedures. 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 been ignored to date.

Construction will begin on some projects before public consultation is complete.

The many new dams are expensive and unjustified and economically irresponsible. The full cost for many projects is unknown as business cases are lacking, but the total bill could be in the hundreds of millions or billions.

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.

Sacred sites and Aboriginal culture will be destroyed. 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, and 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.

There will be huge environmental impact and a leap into the unknown. It is expected that these areas will lose at least 30% of precipitation and droughts will be severe, long, and frequent. When the rain does fall it will do so in huge amounts over short times causing huge floods and resulting in damage downstream from the dams and weirs.

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 upstream 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, and desiccate downstream river channels.

Environmental Impact Studies do not account for downstream impacts.

The NSW government could get legally embroiled as the projects are 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.

Please do not go ahead with any more dams at this stage.