

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

**Organisation:** Clarence Valley Council

**Date Received:** 22 September 2020

---

21 September 2020

The Director  
Portfolio Committee No. 7 – Planning and Environment  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Sir

**Re: Inquiry into the rationale for, and impacts of, new dams and other water infrastructure in NSW**

Thank you for the opportunity for Council to make a submission to the above inquiry. Council's submission is related to item 1(a) in the Committee's terms of reference which is to give "consideration of other options for ensuring water security in inland regions".

Clarence Valley Council is located on the north coast of New South Wales and contains most of the Clarence River catchment, which is the largest coastal river in NSW, within its area. Diversion of the Clarence River to west of the Great Dividing Range has historically been suggested as having a supposed benefit of providing increased water security for western areas. Council is particularly concerned about the Mole River dam project, which we note is one of the specific projects being considered by the Inquiry, because there have previously been suggestions that the Clarence catchment be diverted into the Upper Mole River (see for example an article in the *Daily Examiner* on 18 May 2007 - <https://www.dailyexaminer.com.au/news/apn-clarence-plan-unconstitutional-says-port/134351/>).

The Clarence community has repeatedly raised concerns regarding diversion proposals such as through the "Not a Drop" campaign and representations to councillors. It should be noted that during the recent drought, in October 2019 the Clarence River actually stopped flowing.

Council has considered the issue of diversion on numerous occasions, and its position has consistently been to oppose any diversion. Council's opposition is best summarised in resolution 15.081/16 from its meeting of 18 August 2016:

*That Council reiterates its policy position of opposition to any proposal that would result in any diversion of water from Clarence catchments, as previously resolved by Council resolutions 12.005/06, 05.006/07 and 10.017/10.*

Any diversion of the Clarence is considered to adversely impact both the local economy (in particular the fishing industry), and also the natural environment. Diversion of the Clarence would reduce the well documented benefits of flood flows, which include:

- Increased soil fertility,
- Flushing and spreading of nutrients,
- Groundwater recharge, and
- Maintaining the natural ecological cycle, including fish breeding in the estuary.

The final report of the NSW Legislative Council General Purpose Standing Committee Number 5 Inquiry “Augmentation of water supply for rural and regional New South Wales”, which was printed on 14 May 2018, made 51 recommendations. Although the Inquiry examined the issue of diverting the Clarence River to west of the Great Dividing Range, it made no recommendations regarding this issue with Paragraph 6.89 of the final report stating:

*The committee heard evidence from some inquiry participants that there may be potential benefits of diverting the Clarence River to the west. These inquiry participants were of the view that there is merit to any strategy that seeks to... provide additional water for agriculture in the Barwon region. The committee acknowledges that stakeholders were divided on the issue of water diversion. However, some inquiry participants held strong views against diverting waters from the Clarence River to the west.*

Council reiterates its position to the Inquiry that any proposal to divert the Clarence cannot be justified from an economic, environmental or social perspective. Council is again considering this matter at its meeting on 22 September 2020 and a supplementary submission will advise the Inquiry of any resolution.

Once again thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry. If you require further information please contact Council’s Manager Water Cycle, Mr Greg Mashiah,

Yours faithfully

**Ashley Lindsay**  
**General Manager**