

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

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially
Confidential

Dear Planning and Environment Committee,

The Murray-Darling supports RAMSAR wetlands and critical ecosystems for endangered fish & migratory birds and supplies food for millions. But right now 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.

Dams are being rushed through without due process- some dams are starting construction before public consultation finishes. Business cases, Environmental Impact Studies (EIS) and hydrological reports are incomplete or not publicly available and or not even commenced.

Where they are conducted, the scope of the Environmental Impact Studies does not account for downstream impacts. This is inadequate. 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 vital for the movement of native fish. New dams will also 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.

Sacred cultural sites are historically frequently under-documented; we are at risk of destroying sites of high cultural and historical value. There's are 40 Indigenous nations in the Murray Darling Basin, all projects take place on Aboriginal land where sovereignty was never ceded. Registered Aboriginal sacred sites will be destroyed at many project locations. Changes to hydrology, landscape and country without free, prior and informed consent from Traditional Owners is an act of ongoing colonisation.

I also ask that the lawfulness of the new dam constructions to be questioned. 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.

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.