

Submission  
No 128

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

**Name:** Miss Sandra Smith  
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I am a third generation landholder and irrigator on the Mole River downstream of the proposed dam site. My grandfather put this property together in 1907 by buying up numerous small holdings. The property is dissected by the Mole River--5 kms of double river frontage has always been considered an advantage but it quite possibly won't be if this ill-conceived dam goes ahead. There would be some very difficult management issues during releases.

I welcome this opportunity to make a submission to the inquiry into the dam and thank Ms Cate Faehrmann MLC and fellow MLCs for initiating the inquiry. I sincerely hope we will have access to your findings.

By and large I support the comprehensive submission put forward by the Mole River Protection Alliance of which I am a member.

There has been no consultation or discussion with existing Mole River water users on what will be the possible impacts going from an unregulated to a regulated water source and how this will be managed. No guarantee has been given that we won't be worse off with the dam. The cost of our water will certainly be higher and access and availability could well be less if we don't receive 100% high security allocations.

There have been some outlandish claims coming from NSW Water Minister Melinda Pavey and the General Manager of Tenterfield Shire Council with regard to their notions of how the Mole River Dam would benefit town water supplies and horticultural industries on the tablelands above the dam even growing crops that can't be grown in frost prone areas (eg blueberries)!!! Such things are not mentioned in the EMM Scoping Report which is encouraging!

The Mole River has become less reliable over the last thirty years or so. This is partly because we seem to get more small insignificant rain events making up our annual totals and less big falls which result in run-off or seep-out that are needed to maintain flows. Also, there is way more timber on the hills of the valley as a result of the near eradication of rabbits and not many properties running sheep anymore both of which kept regrowth under control. Therefore there is more trees soaking up the underground water. This would not help put water in the dam.

The dam would only increase irrigation water security downstream of the Mole minimally and If it is supposed to increase security of town water supplies 500kms downstream this is extremely inefficient and more thought and imagination should be put into improving those water supplies closer to where they are needed.

The proposed dam is too small to make a significant positive difference. It would probably rarely be full being so far up the catchment and therefore missing many of the tributaries flowing in. Perhaps a desalination plant on the coast and a pipeline up and over the hill into the dam would help to deliver the touted increase in water security downstream!! And the theoretical horticulturalists on the tablelands could perhaps grab some water as it goes past!! It would be mighty expensive though!

In 2016 a feasibility study for a dam on the Mole River was commissioned despite two previous proposals being rejected as uneconomic. Unsurprisingly this study came to the same conclusion ie that the dam is NOT economically viable. It is beyond belief that even more taxpayers' dollars are being thrown at it in an attempt to come up with a different answer. It is irresponsible for the NSW State and Federal Governments to keep trying to get a different conclusion to satisfy (I suspect) political objectives of being seen to be doing something to stop future droughts. The dam would no doubt have been empty well before the most serious part of the present drought (we are still very dry up here).and would not have helped to mitigate the devastation of this valley by the

January 2011 flood because it would have already have been full from the very wet few months prior to that flood making the catchment saturated.

Who will ultimately pay for the dam? All taxpayers or just irrigators? When the wall on Pindari Dam was raised a levy was placed on benefitting irrigators which rendered the water too expensive to use for many people.

Interfering with with the natural high and low flows of the river will be detrimental to the river banks and to the inhabitants of the river. Even though the Mole didn't flow into the Dumaresq for 2 years prior to February 2020, and there were vast tracts almost completely dry, when the river flowed again NSW Fisheries surveys found all species they normally found and one species they hadn't found before. Droughts and floods are natural; dams and other such interferences are not. The Mole River is a very healthy little stream and it would be such a shame to interfere with that particularly when the benefits would be so small.

In short, to build this dam would be environmental and economic vandalism.

Yours sincerely  
Sandra Smith