

INQUIRY INTO ADEQUACY OF WATER STORAGES IN NSW

Organisation: Forbes Shire Council

Date received: 3/08/2012

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26 July 2012

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The Director
Standing Committee on State Development
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

By Fax: 9230 2981

Dear Sir/Madam

Herewith please find Council's submission to the Legislative Council Inquiry into the adequacy of water storages in NSW for the consideration of the Committee.

Council appreciates the opportunity to be able to make this submission.

Yours faithfully

Cr Phyllis Miller OAM
MAYOR

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SUBMISSION TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL INQUIRY INTO THE ADEQUACY OF WATER STORAGES IN NSW

Forbes Shire Council herewith makes submission into the Legislative Council Inquiry into the adequacy of water storages in NSW

Based on the recent CENTROC Water Security Study it was indicated that many of the towns along the Lachlan River were in risk of running out of river water particularly in conditions such as the recent long running drought. The Lachlan River was stopped at Condobolin and with fears that the river would be stopped at Forbes if the drought conditions lasted much longer.

While Wyangala Dam has quite a large storage volume, in drier times, usage can deplete the Dam quickly if inflows are sustained at the low levels experienced during the recent drought period. Additional storage is likely to provide additional security for the water supply for both townships and other users along the length of the river.

In the situation on the Lachlan River where the Dam is used predominately as an irrigation dam, general usage can drain out additional storage relatively quickly, therefore by the time we are in drought the storage levels are well down.

The urban water supply for towns along the Lachlan River are accessed directly from the river and while there was adequate water in storages for town supplies losses from transmission via the river significantly reduced reliability of the dams. If essential raw water supplies (town water) could be piped rather than transferred by river, then in most cases dams would be more than adequate to meet demands during extended drought. The downside is that the river may not flow in the middle and lower reaches during these times.

However many of the communities along the Lachlan River rely heavily on irrigation and these communities suffered huge economic losses during the recent drought due to reduced on farm income.

Mining has also become a very important contributor to the Lachlan region with mines providing much needed boost to local economies through job creation, housing and industry boosts. These mines require large amounts of water. The recent drought highlighted the importance of a reliable water supply to these communities and the dangers to these communities economically when these mines became concerned over their viability should water become difficult to procure.

In summary Forbes Shire Council welcomes the review of the adequacy into the water storages in NSW and considers the water storage matter for the Lachlan Region to have enormous impacts on the local and regional economy. The recent drought did create an economic downturn in the region due to the reduction in available water that did occur. The drought also highlighted the potential for a further economic disaster for the region had the drought continued with river flow ceasing completely. A review of the water storages has the potential to consider the recent scenario and long term effects of sustained drought for the region.

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