

199 James Gibson Rd
Clunes, via Lismore NSW 2480
29th May 2007

Chairman
Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
Parliament House
Canberra

Dear Sir

Re: Inquiry into water supplies for south-east Queensland-invitation for submissions

I refer to the above inquiry and, in particular, the merits of supply options relating to the Clarence River in northern NSW.

My submission is philosophic only; purely based on experience and foresight of a mature age resident of the northern rivers region.

My forbears and I have resided in the Clarence Valley for over 150 years as farmers of 4 generations. More recently (30 years), I have been a professional agriculturist, farmer, and horticulture consultant in the Richmond Valley. During the 1970s I canvassed (and slowly witnessed advances) for the breakdown of parochial local council barriers for more expedient use of local government resources and broader geographic approach to regional matters. A similar problem of greater magnitude now besets us with respect to water supply infrastructure.

The recent prolonged drought in eastern Australia has highlighted the need for urgent upgrading of water supply infrastructure for major population centers and adjacent intensive farmland along the eastern seaboard.

Droughts are an accepted environmental reality in the 'driest continent on earth', and stress the need for government responsibility to minimize inevitable recurring drought impacts.

The expansion of water supply infrastructure on the eastern seaboard needs to transcend municipal, State and political boundaries for the national common good.

The large water-shed of the Clarence River basin offers significant potential for harnessing large volumes of water in the high summer rainfall of 'wet years' in the long-term weather cycle. Modern water flow control strategies/apparatus could minimize potential negative impacts on relatively minor river-dependent industries and the environment in that valley. The potential usage of harnessed water for local water supply

in northern New South Wales, and augmentation for south-east Queensland would be significant.

The expanding population centers of Brisbane and the Gold Coast are in close proximity to northern New South Wales. New road upgrades will increase this proximity and increase the two-way migration (and economic and social ties) across the intervening State boundary. As this migration progresses, it will blur artificial boundaries in the future.

The current generation should not be viewed in Australian history as neglecting (or providing piecemeal solutions for) vital water infrastructure projects to reduce exposure to recurring drought, especially in a relatively affluent era. Hard decisions need to transcend local politics, vested interest, introspective negativity, and an extreme or short-sighted environmental lobby.

An advanced economy receiving unprecedented economic wealth from the 'mining boom' is perfectly placed to embark on an ambitious long-term project of supplying tangible water supply infrastructure on the eastern seaboard of Australia, where population potential is obviously greatest. Government needs to commit to a large scale, long-term (20 years+) project of the order of \$100 billion to secure our water and power requirements for the remainder of this century. I believe that a properly integrated project (series of interconnected storage structures) of sufficient scale would address this requirement as well as possible unforeseen national strategic security issues.

Yours sincerely

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