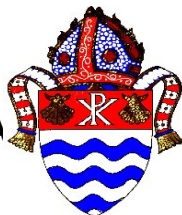


The Secretary
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600



Submission to the National Water Commission re the report on-

Integrated Water Supply Options for North East New South Wales and South East Queensland.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I write as Bishop of the Diocese of Grafton and on behalf of my Anglican community and people within the Diocese of Grafton. It is a fundamental view of us as a Christian community that believes in God's Creation that the proposals contained in the Integrated Water Supply Options Paper are incorrect. I will address our concerns under several headings.

PREAMBLE

The Diocese of Grafton extends from the Queensland border to Port Macquarie in the south, with the Great Dividing Range as the western border. Therefore, the five preferred options for capturing water named in the above report are contained within the Diocesan region.

Our Diocese prides itself on being a "green" Diocese, being very aware and active in environmental issues, locally and at a National level. For this reason it is of particular concern to us what happens to the environment and communities in which we live.

We seek to live more lightly upon the Earth and to protect what we call God's Creation. This proposal compromises that position as it compromises the very river systems which are suggested as future sources of water for South east Queensland.

CONCERNS

The concerns of the Diocese are fourfold –

1. Ecological – There are obvious implications on natural ecosystems when the normal flow of a waterway is impeded. I do not need to detail to members of your Committee that the very natural features of an uncompromised river system are put under pressure and challenge by the proposals in the Report. How do fish and other aquatic life manage to migrate and breed in a system with a major stream flow impediment (a dam) across the previously unimpeded natural waterway? How do we cope with silt accumulation and what happens to the animals of all kinds which are displaced (and I could suggest killed) by the actual inundation by the dam's waters?
2. Economic- There are extensive commercial activities along each of the major river systems in northern NSW eg fisheries and more particularly the tourism industry. Any effect on these industries will have a major impact on the human communities which rely on the rivers involved. Similarly the compromising of tourist experiences in the river areas will have a detrimental effect on the local economy.

3. Scientific – Has there been sufficient research gone into the actual amount of good fresh water which is available? Whilst the rivers look to have wide flows of fresh water there are many substantial salt water lens's travelling up to the northern rivers which compromise the ability of the rivers to provide substantial amounts of fresh water to both NSW and Queensland.
4. Community – Linked to the above is the likely interruption of the Clarence and other ways of life by the damming of a Mighty River! The concept that this wide and slow flowing river could be giving water to Queensland (whose need is not challenged) is beyond the comprehension of most Northern Rivers residents. That a life style which has been in place for more than 160 years will be changed cannot be gain stayed. Is the benefit worth the cost?

Conclusion

The drought is a major issue and concern of every thinking Australian, but there are other long term approaches which could be considered to drought proof the nation. These include matters such as recycling of waste water as happens in large parts of Europe, reducing water use as is beginning to happen and education and incentives on water conservation which does not happen often enough.

I hope that you might consider these options ahead of the proposals contained in the report.

Yours faithfully

