

4 June 2007

Senator Bill Heffernan  
Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee  
Department of the Senate  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

**RE: Senate Inquiry – Clarence River Dam option**

While dams are essential infrastructure to provide water supplies, their environmental and economic impacts can outweigh the benefits.

Any water shortages in south-east QLD result solely from inadequate planning. Population levels should not have been allowed to grow in SE QLD beyond the limits of secure resources. Planners had access to the relevant water balance information – including drought occurrences and climate change scenarios.

An immediate halt to increased growth should be implemented in SE QLD, and consideration given to cancelling large approved urban developments and providing compensation, or imposing conditions such as permanent level 5 water restrictions.

Constructing dams on coastal NSW rivers to alleviate the impacts of poor planning is, put simply, more bad planning.

Coastal rivers need their flows, especially in times of climate change – more droughts, more floods, more extreme events.

We're trying to find the balance of environment and development/growth that will lead to sustainability, and despite what you might be told, we're nowhere near it yet.

Coastal rivers should not be dammed for reasons, including:

1. floods provide sediment to floodplains – one of the key events likely to sustain floodplain agriculture in times of sea level change. If floodplains don't receive sediment loads which increase their elevation, they will be more quickly affected by salt inundation as sea levels rise & storm surges occur.
2. healthy catchments need healthy natural flow regimes
3. fishing and tourism economies rely on healthy rivers (including flood flows)
4. floods provide essential nutrients and organic matter to rivers and oceans
5. floodplains are just that – plains that flood. Their wetlands rely on extreme floods, and the connections that occur at these times "feed" rivers.

I would like to voice my opposition to damming coastal NSW Rivers to bail out unsustainable growth in other areas. Or to alleviate the other poor planning regime that resulted in over-allocation of water in inland areas (eg Murray-Darling system).

Yours sincerely

Alan Cibilic