

Dear Senators

On behalf of the Clarence Branch of Climate Change Australia, I am writing to express our opposition to proposals to 'drought proof' the urban areas of south-east Queensland with water taken from rivers in northern NSW.

Climate Change Australia is a community-based group established in 2005 with branches in the Manning, Hastings and Clarence. The aims of our organisation are to raise awareness about climate change issues and impacts, to encourage everyone to save energy and water, to promote the increased use of renewable energy, and to encourage all levels of government to take urgent action on climate change.

Along other groups based in the Clarence, we feel we have been disenfranchised from the enquiry process due to your secretariat's decision not to advertise in the relevant local press. This submission is therefore rushed and is not supported by detailed research.

However, the SMEC report advocating the construction of dams in the Clarence and Tweed catchments also suffers from being rushed and is also not supported by detailed research. All schemes identified by SMEC should be considered to have no merit and to be unviable. The SMEC report uses a century's worth of 'average' river flow, without pointing out the diminishing amounts of this flow over the past decades, a possible consequence of shifting climate patterns due to global warming. The Clarence Environment Centre's submission (Submission #214) demonstrates the variable nature of the flow in the Clarence at Lilydale and that flows over the past 15 years are well below average, in fact 40% of the amount assumed by SMEC in their report.

Like other environment groups in NSW, we are concerned that SMEC's report (despite claims to the contrary) does not reveal the likely environmental impacts of their proposals, not even identifying that national parks and wilderness areas will be inundated, and that major regional corridors for faunal movement will be cut. The severing of these corridors will greatly reduce opportunities for the movement of wildlife and their ability to migrate and adapt to a warming climate. Such altitudinal corridors (e.g. linking Wollumbin to the Border Ranges through Mebbin National Park, or linking the Richmond and Koreelah Ranges, or along the foothills of the Great Escarpment in Nymboida National Park) need to be enhanced if our wildlife is to survive climate change. They should not be flooded.

We are also concerned that SMEC has not considered climate change and projected changes in weather patterns in assessing the viability of their proposed dams. While we consider they would be rarely if ever be filled under current weather patterns to justify their expense in construction, in future they may never supply more than a trickle.

Lastly, we have grave concerns regarding the investment of energy in the construction of a proposed dam, and in the pumping of water vast distances across a catchment divide. The partial recovery of this energy in some hydro electric scheme as the water

flows down hill into Queensland is so small, it is almost laughable that SMEC refers to it in their report.

In your consideration of the SMEC report, it must be remembered that SMEC's sole business is constructing dams - not supplying water. There are other, more cost effective and less environmentally damaging options to supply water to urban areas - including retro-fitting of water efficiency measures, water re-use, and the installation of water tanks and other rainwater harvesting measures. Reducing the amount of potable water that is treated for supply to metropolitan centres is one measure that urban Australians can take to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

Yours sincerely

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