

SUBMISSION

NORTH COAST REGIONAL WATER STRATEGY

Our water strategy should at all times take into account Option 16 of the Draft's list, that is " Sustainable extraction limits for surface and groundwater sources". This should be the basis of all options.

Always use best scientific data.

Industry needs should be subservient to environmental needs. Industries come and go.

Our water reserves are our most precious asset for the benefit of everyone.

Acceptance of climate change science should also be paramount, noting that there will be more variability and uncertainty which should preclude over enthusiastic estimates of allowable diversions, harvestable rights or extraction.

I would like to comment on some of the strategies that have particular relevance to the Clarence Region.

OPTION 1 Expansion of Clarence/Coffs Harbour Regional Water Scheme to include Bellingen and Nambucca. This would put excessive strain on the Nymboida River and thus on the Clarence River system. I don't see that it would be ecologically sustainable. Alternatives are mentioned elsewhere, such as portable de-salination plants. Considering Dorrigo has a very high rainfall, surely some off-stream storage could also be considered.

Following on from that, OPTION 4 -Augmentation of the Shannon Creek dam would not be necessary. The dam is currently adequate for the purpose it was built - that is to supply Grafton and Coffs Harbour. The considerations noted in the draft strategy - turbidity issues, and current licence arrangement difficulties, should preclude this option.

Not noted as an option but noted in the Border Rivers Strategy I STRONGLY OPPOSE any diversion of the Clarence inland. The last drought saw complete cessation of flow in some parts of the Upper Clarence. Any such diversion would cause irreparable damage to our river system both ecologically and financially (e.g. Fishing Industry). Our heritage should not be sacrificed to the greed and mis-management of some irrigators who over the years have extracted too much water from rivers in their own catchments with the resultant disaster that is the Murray- Darling mess.

I have already mentioned that environmental needs should be paramount, and therefore I have serious concerns about the emphasis being placed on industry needs throughout the draft. In our area, most of this industry consists of the intensive farming of blueberries and raspberries, and as such, as well as the requirements for supply of water, there are huge environmental problems such as excessive use of chemicals and the clearing of large areas of native vegetation. The compliance to date with water regulations has been abysmal.