

13 November 2008

IPART

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Submission: Review of prices for water, sewerage, stormwater and recycled water services for Hunter Water Corporation from 1 July 2009

I have lived on ten Central Coast (Wyong Shire) for some 34 years – the last 12 of which I have relied solely on tank water.

So why do I care sufficiently to write about water prices in the Hunter ?

Residents on the Central Coast have for years been subjected to water restrictions; in my view caused primarily by the abject failure of the current government to plan adequate water storage. The Mangorve Creek “Dam” – more accurately describe as a ‘reservoir’ - was always designed to be a water storage facility for water pumped from excess flows in Wyong River.

Despite an approximate trebling of the local population over 30 years, the pipeline was never built – no surprise that water storage in the ‘dam’ was inadequate !!

I acknowledge that a relatively small decline in coastal rainfall exacerbated the problem .. but this was NOT the prime cause of the need for water restrictions.

In an effort to solve the water shortage problem, a pipeline was recently built – enabling water sharing with the Hunter. Essentially the Central Coast buys Hunter Water ... hence my concern with the price of water under Hunter Water.

I am yet to see any convincing evidence that Tillegra Dam is other than a politicians’ ‘get out of jail card’. It was NOT planned as part of the Hunter Regional Strategies and has been mentioned here only recently – around the same time as locals ramped up opposition to a proposed mine which would threaten our water catchment in the valley hinterland behind Wyong.

To date, I see no evidence that the proposed Tillegra Dam is either necessary, costed or that it wont be destructive of a pristine valley near Dungog.

I am concerned at recent suggestions Central Coast residents will have to pay for the Tillegra Dam when I believe there is no need for it. Many water conservation alternatives are cheaper and less destructive than building dams.

The Central Coast contains a significantly large proportion of older people than other areas in NSW - this is an unfair measure as this significant price increase will dramatically affect low income people. There is no real incentive for high income people to reduce their use.

Before granting price increases, I believe IPART should require Hunter Water to look more carefully at all other options to providing water for the region before charging us for this dam which will be destructive.

If the IPART review is to be seen as other than an ineffectual 'rubber stamp', IPART must conduct a full review of the need for Tillegra Dam, its environmental impact and its costing to ensure that we water users get proper value for money.

Kevin Armstrong