

From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: [REDACTED]  
To: [REDACTED]  
Subject: Submission for the Draft Lachlan Regional Water Strategy

To whom it may concern:

Re: Draft Lachlan regional Water Strategy

I am a landholder, one of four who live below the dam wall of Lake Rowlands from which Coombing Creek flows, and thence on to the Belubula River and Lachlan River. We all own farming enterprises which depend on water from Coombing Creek for stock and domestic purposes. We also employ local people to work on the farms. For two of us, either we or our families have been here for over 150 years and the other over 80 years. As a result we have a deep attachment and knowledge of the creek and its environmental values. It is from this standpoint I wish to make the following submission.

In general the Strategy reads more like a 'prospectus' than a well presented case for the various actions proposed. The potential benefits are highlighted while the downsides or negative effects of proposed actions hardly rate a mention. A case in point is the raising of the wall on Lake Rowlands. There are no negative effects mentioned in the proposed plan to raise the wall - those downstream whose livelihoods depend on a healthy flowing creek of clean water do not rate a mention. In the eyes of those drafting the Strategy we are invisible.

Further, Coombing Creek is listed as an unregulated creek and legally it could well be argued that it is. However the reality is that it is highly regulated in that downstream from the dam there are no significant inflows into the creek and the reality is that the owners of the dam control all the flow to its junction with the Belubula river. It is quite conceivable and highly probable that in the rush to get access to water for urban expansion or critical irrigation needs, there may be no releases from Lake Rowlands. Under the NSW Water Management Act 2000, Section 49(3c) which deals with the water for critical human needs the Act states that if a failure to meet nonhuman consumption needs causes significant economic social or national security costs then water should be allocated to service those needs. The failure to supply water to Coombing Creek could well trigger significant social and economic costs and

yet there is no mention of this in the Strategy.

Coombing Creek is a rarity as far as I can discern in that the requirement for an environmental flow was dropped when Lake Rowlands was constructed. There appears to be no legal requirement for the owners of Lake Rowlands to release an environmental flow or indeed any water at all from the dam. In today's climate of global warming and a more enlightened approach to the environment it is surprising that an important riparian contributor such as Coombing Creek should be excluded from any attempted ecological and riparian preservation. Surely it can not be the governments intention to trash such a valuable natural asset.

My final point is that those of us who live along the creek have legislated riparian rights. The document is a testament to the abject failure to preserve the rights of individual who might be affected by the raising of the wall on Lake Rowlands. For example, no one has been able to say who 'owns' the water in Lake Rowlands. What right does Central Tablelands Water have to control (= 'own') all the water in Coombing Creek – to sell some for urban use and to pass the remainder on to NSW Water to sell to irrigators, and not be required to pass on any to downstream users or the environment? While this may seem farfetched, all of this is proposed in the Regional Water Strategy. Lake Rowlands and the water contained within it are treated in the Strategy as if the sole ownership resides with Central Tablelands Water. Our riparian rights as downstream stock and domestic water users are silent in the Strategy.

Hence both the environment and downstream water users of Coombing Creek have become invisible in the Strategy. The needs of the environment and the rights of water users associated with Coombing Creek are not accommodated within the plan in any way shape or form. Under what is proposed, Coombing Creek could cease to exist and several large farming enterprises employing local people reduced to marginal enterprises.

I believe I can speak for all water users down stream of Lake Rowlands by saying that none of us are in opposition to the enlargement of the dam. However, in the course of this enlargement we don't want to see our basic rights to water diminished or the environmental values of Coombing Creek (which are considerable) diminished. The Strategy as it stands fails to guarantee any of this.

Without addressing the rights of downstream users and the needs of the environment on Coombing Creek the strategy will be seen as yet another unsuccessful attempt to deal with water issues in this State. If the document is to be seen to reflect the needs of the community and environment in relation to Coombing Creek, then it must do so in a transparent and meaningful way.

Yours Faithfully

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