

# REGION BESET BY WATER SUPPLY ISSUES

Throughout the Northern Rivers, Councils are grappling with the problem of ensuring adequate potable water supplies to meet the needs of a growing population.

Here are two examples of approaches being taken by the Lismore and Tweed Councils.

**Nimbin's water supply**  
by Megan James  
Nimbin Advisory Group (NAG)

The secure yield of water for Nimbin is now predicted at five years, where it was previously estimated at 10-15 years. This prediction may be inaccurate given the effects of climate change.

The original weir at the headwaters of Mulgum Creek was not designed to cope with current usage, let alone predicted increases due to the number of Council-approved development applications, including dual occupancies, further increasing pressure on water supplies.

There is also already an almost total lack of environmental flow downstream of the weir in dry times, and Mulgum Creek is badly degraded and weed-infested along its length, a major concern to the Landcare group.

The proposed upgrading of the water supply was the subject of significant investigation from 1997 to 2003, commencing shortly after the construction of the off-stream storage, DE Williams Dam, in 1996. A 2012 NAG report to council regarding the upgrade made many recommendations, including further consultation around design of the treatment system.

A public report circulated at the end of Stage 1 outlined the final cost of Stage 1, the financial savings and



Meagre environmental flows at Nimbin weir in December 2020

the commitment to commence and complete Stage 2. The report noted a timeframe of approximately 20 months for Stage 2, once designed.

Stage 1 cost \$2 million and Stage 2 will cost in the vicinity of \$2.5 million. Stage 2 is the filtration/treatment system, still in the design phase a decade later.

NAG has regularly asked for updates, which were finally given by Scott Turner, LCC assets manager, who attended our February meeting with details.

Completing Stage 2 of the upgrade project will connect existing rural customers to the main water supply by providing a new treatment plant to deal with dirty water issues. The construction of this will begin at the end of the year and could result in 30% greater efficiency on completion.

Neither covering the dam to prevent evaporation nor building a larger reservoir on a new site are currently under investigation.

Council plans to close the water

filling station at Nimbin to both water carters and roadworks water trucks when Stage 2 water restrictions are announced.

This 'returns' water to the system for use by those already connected, but staff advised it does not deal with the bigger issue of increasing capacity of the Nimbin water supply to cater for future growth around Nimbin.

NAG strongly recommended to Council that all new housing and commercial developments be required to be self-sufficient in water and that future works aim to restore environmental flows.

**Clarrie Hall Dam**  
from Tweed Shire Council

Tweed Council is inviting the community to have its say on the proposed raising of Clarrie Hall Dam before the completion of the project's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Council is proposing to raise the



Part of a 3D animation of the proposed raising of Clarrie Hall Dam

wall of Clarrie Hall Dam by 8.5 metres to double the dam's footprint and treble its capacity from 16,000 megalitres to 42,300 megalitres.

This would provide a secure water supply for the Tweed until at least 2046 and increase the supply's resilience to climate change.

The project's EIS consultant, EcoLogical Australia, will manage the on-line consultation to explain key EIS findings to date and answer any questions.

Tweed Shire residents and other stakeholders are encouraged to register on: [www.yoursaytweed.com.au/raisingclarriehall-eis](http://www.yoursaytweed.com.au/raisingclarriehall-eis) to have their say before the community consultation closes at 4pm on Tuesday 17th March.

Visitors to the site can view a 3D animated flyover of the proposal; read a draft EIS summary; ask a question; request a call-back to speak to the EIS consultant; and complete a short survey to express their views about the proposal.

The proposal to raise the wall

of Clarrie Hall Dam has been classified as State Significant Infrastructure. Council has received part-funding for the EIS under the NSW Government's Safe and Secure Water Program.

When the EIS is completed, the studies will be placed on public exhibition by the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) for 28 days for people to make formal submissions on the proposal.

DPIE will consider both the EIS and Response to Submissions Report and then make a recommendation to the Minister as to whether the project should go ahead and, if so, under what conditions.

Assuming the Minister recommends the project can proceed, the final decision on whether to progress to construction will be made by Tweed Shire Council.

> See also an update on the Dunoon Dam proposal by Rous County Councillor Darlene Cook on p.11



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