

CASE STUDY: The History of Water Supply on the Central Coast

2. Historical development of the Water Supply System

Below is a brief history of the development of Water Supply on the Central Coast. This, together with the tabulated summary in **Appendix 1** can be used to construct the **Timeline** on Page 3.

Outline of the development of the Central Coast Water Supply System.



Plate 4: Aboriginal grinding grooves in a tributary of Bucketty Gully. Attenbrow (2004) in 'Terra Australis' 21.

For thousands of years, Aboriginal people on the Central Coast relied on the fresh water resources of natural rivers, creeks and water holes within the Gosford Wyong region.

Europeans moving into the area two centuries ago tended to build their settlements close to those same natural water supply points. As settlement expanded out from these surface water sources, they were supplemented with water from dug wells and household tanks.

It wasn't until 1929/1930 that the first centralised water supply system was implemented for the town of Wyong. A concrete-lined reservoir was constructed on Chapman Hill and water was pumped to it from the Wyong River for distribution to the residents.

In 1938, town water came to Gosford, when the Mayor turned on the new water supply direct from a dam on the lower reaches of Mooney Mooney Creek. Piping water to the northern areas of the Wyong Shire began in the 1950s. In 1960, the first stage of the Entrance Water Supply Scheme commenced. Officially opened in 1965, the expanded scheme eventually provided reticulated water throughout much of the Shire.

A new dam on Mooney Mooney Creek (4600 ML) was built in 1961 to replace the old one further down the creek. A year later Mardi Dam (7400 ML) and Wyong River Weir were completed. A weir across lower Mangrove Creek was built in 1975.

As dependence on these centralised facilities increased, it became more and more important that the raw water from them be treated to guarantee standards of public health. In line with this, Somersby Water Treatment Plant was constructed, the first stage in 1971 and a subsequent stage in 1986, resulting in a maximum production rate of 140 megalitres per day. In Wyong Shire, the first stage of the Mardi Water Treatment Works was opened for use in 1984 with subsequent augmentation in 1992 providing a maximum production rate of 160 ML per day.

These developments in infrastructure were matched by improvements in management of the system. In 1977 Gosford and Wyong Councils entered into an agreement (the Gosford and Wyong Council Joint Water Supply Agreement) to construct, operate, maintain, and share costs of the water supply headworks. This agreement was administered by the Gosford/Wyong Joint Water Supply Committee. Under this agreement Councils and NSW Department of Public Works completed construction of a major storage dam on Mangrove Creek in 1982. This dam was an eighty feet high, rock-filled wall with a storage capacity of 190,000 ML. Provision was made to increase the height by 25 meters to a total capacity of 420,000 ML if the need arose. In 1989 an 11km tunnel linking Mangrove Creek Dam and Wyong River was completed. This tunnel enables transfers of water from the dam to Wyong River for later extraction at the Wyong River pumping station and weir (for pumping to Mardi Dam storage).

Over the next two decades, this Joint Committee evolved into the Gosford/Wyong Councils' Water Authority with an independent Chairman overseeing the management of the Joint Water Supply Scheme (JWSS). Since 1992 a severe drought has impacted the Central Coast. This has required implementation of a comprehensive drought management strategy by Councils. One outcome has been *WaterPlan 2050* - a detailed program to expand supply and reduce per capita demand to ensure future needs are met.

