



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

---

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES  
Ms Tara Cheyne MLA (Chair), Miss Candice Burch MLA (Deputy Chair), Mr James Milligan

## Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into the supply of water to the Tharwa Community

**Submission Number: 07**

**Date Authorised for Publication: 21 November 2019**

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in relation to the current proposed site for the Tharwa water project. I own and live in the house directly below the current preferred site and have several concerns in relation to the proposal and the overall ongoing management of the project.

After the water report on Tharwa's water security I was thrilled to hear of the decision to spend a sizable amount of money on Tharwa's water supply and was absolutely gutted to find out that the Project would only supply water for fire-fighting purposes. Initially only for urban units which was ridiculous when you calculate the amount of house fires in Tharwa over the last century (1) and recently updated to include bushfire fighting units, which would seem a little more sensible.

The Tharwa Community Association and I, as the Treasurer, currently manages the village non-potable water supply. Run purely as a not for profit activity, the Association provides water to homes in the main village via aging water pipes that are constantly being patched. With new blocks being released I note the planning authority has made no attempt to discuss with us about how the new blocks will be serviced. Based on our current bank balance and the aging assets it is unlikely we will be able to assist.

The water project would have been a perfect opportunity to upgrade the current water system and provide security for new residents as well as the bushfire brigade needs, and I feel this has been a dreadful waste of money. Residents are reliant on the water from the village supply to keep gardens green and in some instances grey water useage for example I use the water supply to keep a portable firefighting unit filled with water and ready for use if needed. The Village water is imperative in the event of a fire to allow residents to prepare by hosing down roofs as well as filling gutters and drainpipes.

There have been several sites proposed for this project which have been rejected for various reasons. Each proposal costing the Public more and more money. The current proposed site to put a few tanks and pumps on a block within the centre of the village. I have not been able to view the latest plans and I am quite concerned about the placement of this infrastructure. The site will attract vandalism and as with water tanks across the ACT the site will need to be protected by high fences which frankly will look dreadful and detract quite negatively on the look and feel of the Village.

The water facility will need to be accessed by fire vehicles before, during and after any fire events in and around the local area and access will be 24 hour a day. All fire vehicles have loud reversing warning signals, and diesel engines, this coupled with the fire pumps will create quite a large amount of noise at any time of the day or night. Firefighters coming back from fires need time to unwind and debrief and this will be likely to be done whilst filling up the water tanks. This should not be done within spitting distance of residential properties.

The site is also in close proximity to the pre-school and should be considered an extreme risk to young children who would find the trucks, lights and noise compelling and would be likely to go wandering to investigate and watch and it would not take very much for an accident to happen.

This is the second or third option floated in relation to this project and all I can see if loads of money spend on a project officers salary and various subcontractors doing soil testing and environmental reports, tree audits for the each site and all completed well before the Community was consulted. And each time the community resoundly rejected each proposal. As a project officer myself, I would have consulted stakeholders on their preference in the **first** instance and work on a plan based on the outcome of that consultation. This has all been done and little arse about frankly.

From the outset, the community supported a large tank being housed behind the store or fire shed on the hill above the village. Water could be pumped up to the tank and then gravity fed to a standpipe or hydrant further down the hill in the asphalt area near the shop. In addition, the water could also be treated using a Prebuilt water filtration system on a skid unit (as produced by deMaher Industrial Services) and with the assistance of the ACT Government and/or ICON water could update the aging water pipes and pipe 'potable' water to all homes in the Village including the new blocks. Bringing the village firmly back into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The only stumbling block I can see is that the land on the Hill is currently a rural lease and the ACT Government would need to resume or make some form of agreement with the lessee for access. I am sure the lessee would be more than amendable to either option if he could access some of the water for his stock troughs. I am pretty sure most if not all of Canberra's water supply comes from gravity feed from tanks on the tops of hills in and around the city. This cannot be a new idea.

Frankly if it were not for the Namadgi rangers who keep the grass mowed and the public toilet facilities clean we would see little or nothing of ACT Government services within the Village. The drains on the bridge and roadways are blocked and prone to overflowing, the roads are disintegrating, the school closed and there is no infrastructure to speak of. And now you want to put a bloody great eye saw in the middle of the village which will be little or no benefit to the village residents. Why on earth does the ACT Government keep treating our Community so poorly. We pay rates, taxes and ask for nothing but respect. Surely that is not too much to ask.

Thanks for your consideration.  
Janet