

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

Mr Mick Gentleman MLA *Chair*, Mr Zed Seselja MLA *Deputy Chair*,
Ms Mary Porter AM MLA

SUBMISSION CONCERNING

WATER USE AND MANAGEMENT INQUIRY

Honorable Committee Members:

I am making the following submission as the ACT Facilitator of Territory Waterwatch Program. Waterwatch is a national community water quality monitoring network that encourages all Australians to become active in the protection of their waterways.

Monitoring water quality gives us a picture of catchment health and can assist with the rehabilitation of our waterways.

ACT Waterwatch provides funding for water monitoring and water education activities, as well as training, technical advice and promotional services across the three catchment groups in the region.

As a non-government body focused on surface water, I have only commented on those points to which I may add some value.

(1) the best options for ACT Government investment in maintaining a sustainable water supply in the ACT with particular reference to:

(a) likely impacts of climate change on water resources available to the ACT;

We are operating under a 'worst case scenario' assumption with respect to climate change in the region. These assumptions include:

- Decreased rainfall continuing in a pattern which has been documented for the last 57 years
- Increased fire-weather risk, and increased likelihood of bushfires, with subsequent impacts on riparian habitat and water quality as outlined by our CAMPFIRE study of the 2003 Bushfires
- Unknown changes in the intervals between rainfall events
 - "Climate Change impacts on fire-weather in south-east Australia" Hennessy, Lucas, Nicholls, Bathols, Suppiah and Rickettes. CSIRO
- Increased evaporation rates

- “Executive Summary” *Australia’s Third National Communication on Climate Change 2002* Australian Government Dept. of Environment and Water, Australian Greenhouse Office
- Projected population rises of 60,000 – 127,000 people (15 -38%) by the year 2032
 - *Canberra Spatial Plan* ACT Planning and Land Authority and Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006 Census

All of these potential impacts imply that water resources in the ACT will be increasingly limited, with associated increased valuation.

(c) international best practice principles and priorities for urban water management suitable for the ACT;

The ACT could be best served by instituting best practice principles to the management of urban storm run off in the following ways:

- Installation of water sensitive urban designs into all new developments including:
 - Source controls
 - Stormwater reuse systems
 - Flow reduction devices
 - Wetlands, swales and bio-retention areas
 - Exclusive use of pervious concrete
- Retrofitting developed areas with water sensitive urban devices to including:
 - Source controls
 - Stormwater reuse systems
 - Flow reduction devices
 - Wetlands, swales and bio-retention areas
 - Pervious concrete
- Increasing the amount and availability of vouchers for residential and commercial rainwater tanks and grey water systems
- Increases in community engagement and education programs concerning urban water management

(d) the role of Canberra as Australia’s national capital and provider of water to the largest population in the Murray-Darling Basin;

We are obliged to model best practice standards, both as the national capital and as a large community high in a catchment.

(e) the relative merits of staged water restrictions as compared to a permanent water conservation strategy;

If the above climatic change projections are correct, then we should move from occasional “once off” staged water restrictions, (which have stretched on to unimagined lengths) to a more holistic, community-based commitment to a permanent water conservation strategy for the region.

(f) maintaining the health of trees, sporting fields and gardens and the city's Bush Capital character;

Canberra's character as ‘The Bush Capital’ must be a reflection of the actual Canberra region environment. Trees and gardens should mimic natural systems that work in this and drier environments, and thus have little or no need of human assistance to thrive.

Potable water should not be used for irrigation purposes. Gardens, sports fields and trees should be watered only from non-potable sources such as grey water and tank water.

Plantings which are not able to survive on such a regime should be replaced by more robust and climatically suitable gardens.

Thank you for allowing Waterwatch the opportunity to participate in this process. Please do not hesitate to contact me, if you would like more information or further details.

Kindest regards,

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