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Attorney-General  
Minister for Consumer Affairs  
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20/92270

Michael Pettersson MLA  
Member for Yerrabi  
[pettersson@act.gov.au](mailto:pettersson@act.gov.au)

Dear Mr ~~Pettersson~~ *Michael*

Thank you for your letter of 17 November 2020 to Minister Vassarotti, about water quality and fish in Yerrabi Pond. Minister Vassarotti has referred your letter to me as this matter falls within my portfolio responsibilities as Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction.

I appreciate your constituent's concern that Yerrabi Pond and surrounds maintain good ecological, amenity and recreational values.

The condition of Yerrabi Pond fluctuates between fair to good based on surveys of water quality, water bugs and riparian condition (see: <http://www.act.waterwatch.org.au/chip.html>). It tends to rate better than nearby Valley Ponds and Gungahlin Pond, and better than some large lakes like Lake Tuggeranong.

Canberra's lakes and ponds, including Yerrabi Ponds are part of the stormwater system and were designed to trap pollutants so they do not enter waterways downstream. So Yerrabi has periods of poor water quality following storms, especially after dry periods when pollutants build up on urban pavements. And droughts cause stress for all aquatic waterbodies, including Yerrabi.

The dry conditions last summer would have negatively impacted both water quality and fish breeding in Yerrabi Pond. With a return to wetter conditions there should be some improvement on both fronts.

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The ACT and Australian Government have recently completed the “Healthy Waterways” program which was a \$93 million investment in infrastructure, research and community education to improve Canberra’s lakes and waterways. Once fully functioning these wetlands, litter traps and other projects are expected to intercept 1900 tonnes of nutrient and sediment. The ACT Government is seeking to extend the Healthy Waterways program over the next four years. More detailed information can be found at:

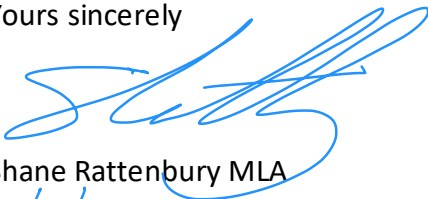
<https://www.environment.act.gov.au/water/act-healthy-waterways/home>.

Urban ponds like Yerrabi Pond serve several purposes. One is to trap soils and nutrients entering waterways from surrounding suburbs so that downstream receiving waters are cleaner and healthier. However, while trapping nutrients and soils in Yerrabi Pond is beneficial for improving downstream water quality, it can detract from the water quality and amenity for locals wishing to enjoy Yerrabi Pond. The best outcome is to prevent soils, nutrients and other pollutants from entering Canberra’s waterways in the first place. This will be the focus of the proposed Healthy Waterways extension.

The ACT Government also regularly stocks the region’s urban lakes, including Yerrabi Pond, with Golden Perch and Murray Cod. Urban lakes and ponds tend to have water regimes that favour exotic fish like carp. The stocking programs aim to tip the balance back in favour of native fish, and to relieve the fishing pressure on natural populations of native fish in nearby rivers.

Thanks for your query and I trust that this information will be of use in responding to your constituent.

Yours sincerely



Shane Rattenbury MLA

21/12/20