



ACT
Government

Environment, Planning and
Sustainable Development

MEETING BRIEF

CED.3.012 - Meeting brief - 21/08039 Ministerial-
Meeting Brief - Vassarotti- Queanbeyan Landcare - 25
March 2021 - SIGNED Mtg Brief + Attachment A

UNCLASSIFIED

To: Minister for the Environment

Tracking No.: 21/08039

From: Executive Group Manager, Environment

Date of meeting: Thursday, 25 March 2021

Subject: Queanbeyan Landcare Group request for funding from revenue raised by the Water Abstraction Charge.

Critical Date: 25 March 2021

- DDG, Environment, Water and Emissions Reduction 17/03/21

Purpose of the meeting

Queanbeyan Landcare Group wishes to meet to discuss funding from revenue raised by the Water Abstraction Charge.

Recommendations

That you note the possible discussion topics for your meeting with Queanbeyan Landcare Group.

Rebecca Vassarotti MLA

Noted / Please Discuss

24/3/2021

Minister's Office Feedback

Signatory Name: Ian Walker

Phone: 6205 9027

Action Officer: Chris Glennon

Phone: 6205 9023

Purpose of the meeting:	To discuss the possibility of ACT Government Funding from revenue raised by the Water Abstraction Charge (WAC). Background information and speaking points are provided at Attachment A .
Attendees:	Bill Hall, Queanbeyan Landcare Chair Tom Baker, Publicity Officer
Directorate representative in attendance:	Mr Ian Walker Executive Group Manager, Environment, Water and Heritage, EPSDD
Day / date:	Thursday, 25 March 2021
Time:	9:45 AM-10:30 AM
Venue:	Minister's Office
Background:	You are not known to have previously met with the Queanbeyan Landcare Group. The government's policy on the WAC is that revenue is included in consolidated revenue and is not hypothecated for specific purposes. More detailed background and speaking points at Attachment A .
Discussion:	Queanbeyan Landcare Group appear to have had a workshop with Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council re actions required to improve catchment health in the Queanbeyan Local Government Area. The issues of concern appear to be systematic of most areas being biodiversity management, invasive plant and pest control and soil degradation. As a result of the workshop, the Landcare Group appears to have been encouraged to approach the ACT Government for funding from the WAC.
Consultation Internal:	Nil
Cross directorate:	The management of the WAC (although approved by the Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) is within the portfolio of CMTEDD (Treasury). Treasury have provided input into Attachment A .
External:	Nil
Media implications:	There are no significant media implications with this meeting.

Items to be discussed

1.1 Topic

Queanbeyan Landcare Group access to funding from revenue raised by the Water Abstraction Charge (WAC).

Background.

- The WAC is imposed under section 107 of the Water Resources Act 2007 through a disallowable instrument (DI) signed annually by the Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction.
- The WAC is a pass-through charge that is collected from urban water users by Icon Water, and from non-urban users by ACCESS Canberra (the Environment Protection Authority), with revenue passed through to ACT Treasury. The WAC is not a levy or a tax.
- The WAC for urban water supply is currently (2020/2021) \$0.631 per kilolitre (\$/kL) of water abstracted and for surface water or groundwater not supplied through the urban water network, \$0.305/kL of water taken. These rates are indexed to increase by 3% per annum. The decision to index the WAC was made by the ACT Government as part of 2016/17 budget process.
- The WAC revenue collected in 2019/2020 was \$ 34.9 million.
- Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council (QPRC) are contributors to the WAC as they receive bulk water supply for use from Icon Water. Their contribution to the WAC is in the vicinity of \$4.32 M.
- The objective of the WAC is to reflect the true value of water and promote the economically efficient and sustainable use of a scarce resource.
- The WAC was put in place to cover costs incurred by the Government including the costs of urban and non-urban water supplies, water catchment management, environment protection of ACT streams and lakes, along with water policy development and administration. The value of the WAC also includes a component related to scarcity, as well as costs associated with the provision of environmental flows.
- The WAC has been a contentious issue with QPRC with its processors having previously sought legal opinion of the validity of the WAC.

Speaking Points

- The Water Abstraction Charge (WAC) is designed to ensure the price of water reflects its true value as a scarce resource, and to help assist in managing demand.
- WAC revenue is included in consolidated revenue and is not hypothecated for specific purposes.
- Requests for funding to undertake management and environmental protection activities related to the Territory's water catchments may be considered through the annual ACT Government Budget process.
- This approach ensures that all funding requests are considered in a consistent, transparent manner, and assessed with all requests for Government funding across a wide range of ACT community needs and priorities.
- The ACT has a history of supporting cross border catchment management by
 - Establishment of the ACT and Region Catchment Management Coordination Group.
 - Providing \$375 K for catchment groups for community engagement activities across the

- region including Molongolo Catchment Group.
- \$270 K for the operations of Waterwatch which includes sections of Cooma, Queanbeyan and Yass LGAs.
 - \$75 K for Frogwatch.
 - Resource sharing with South East Local Land Services and NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service on invasive pest and animal response.
 - Queanbeyan Landcare Group should also be advised that the ACT NRM team are currently updating their NRM Plan and will be undertaking a Drought Resilient Planning process that the group may wish to contribute via the “your say” portal.
 - The ACT Government values the above mentioned programs and will strive to maintain this investment pending other government priorities.