

# WESTON CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL

- *Your Local Voice* -

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*Established 1991*

## **Minutes**

### **Future Water Options**

#### **Meeting**

**7.45pm 27 October 2004**

### **Welcome**

The WCCC Chairperson, Mr Jeff Carl welcomed the guest speakers, the Committee and residents. Mr Carl advised that the topic of the meeting was Canberra Future Water Options and the guest speakers from ACTEW Corporation were Kirrily Dickson and Rebecca Edwards.

A short 'other business' would be conducted.

### **Apologies**

Katy Gallagher MLA, Joe Baker, Jon Rigter, Barbara Brinton

### **Future Water Options**

Kirrily Dickson advised the meeting that the current water use restrictions were the first since the 1960's and Canberran's had responded well in saving 30GL in the period of the restrictions.

The current concern focuses on the adequacy of the storage. To balance the investigation of storage options work was also being progressed to reduce per capita consumption by 12% by 2013 and by 25% by 2023. It was also aimed to increase recycled water use from 5% to 20%.

The project looking at supply options was taking a regional solution not just an ACT solution. There were 30 options considered at the commencement. A desk review and preliminary investigations narrowed this to 11 options. When costing was considered these 11 were reduced to the current 3 options being considered.

The report to Government is on options, timing of options as well as how much water is needed. There are three population growth scenarios being considered 400K, 450K and 500K which are using the figures from the Canberra Spatial Plan. These numbers take into account Queanbeyan and some outlying areas.

An issue of concern is climate change. An interesting piece of research on Perth's water supply inflow has revealed a 40% decrease in inflow since 1973. This could be a step change in climate and the current SE Australia drought may also be a step change in climate.

In respect of the catchment to the west of Canberra there was 98% ground cover damaged and 90% canopy damage in the bushfires of January 2003. There is expected to be a 40% decrease in water inflow into dams in the next 10 years or so as the re-growth of vegetation will extract water.

Generally, Canberra uses 11GL/year of water and approximately 50% of the water is returned to the Murrumbidgee River via the Lower Molonglo Treatment Plant. Recent calculations indicated that 494 GL / year is available. The net use of the water by people is 17GL/yr.

The three storage options are:

- Cotter Dam

Currently 4.7 GL of storage, the scenarios are to raise the wall to store 45 GL or higher still to 76 GL. Cotter catchment has the highest yield of all of the ACT catchments. It is not clear how Cotter Dam is to be considered for expansion as it is Heritage-Listed.

- Tennent Dam

There are also three scenarios, the ravine option with 45GL storage, the medium size with storage of 76 GL and the large option of 164 GL. The large option is larger than Googong Dam at 125GL. There is however a lower inflow into a proposed Tennent Dam. Another consideration is a 'virtual' dam. This would be a weir with a pumping station which pumps excess water flow to an existing dam.

- Tantangara Dam on the Murrumbidgee River

The possibilities are to build a pipeline or tunnel to provide water from an existing NSW dam to an existing ACT dam. The other approach could be to utilise the Murrumbidgee River to deliver the water. This option involves Snowy-Hydro and buying water rights to call on the water as needed. As it is a NSW dam it would involve agreement between the jurisdictions and involve NSW irrigators and the two national parks in the region.

There are numerous studies looking at the three options. There is no clear leader and each option has advantages and disadvantages. In addition there are social and economic implications of each of the options. In February 2005 ACTEW Corporation will present one scenario from each of the three options. In March 2005 ACTEW Corporation will make a recommendation to Government.

Post March 2005 there will be an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the chosen option. Members of the public are welcome to comment at any time and can contact the Project Team on [futurewateroptions@actew.com.au](mailto:futurewateroptions@actew.com.au)

In addition ACTEW Corporation will be holding "value meetings" for the project. These are to seek in depth community input on the values attached to water, water storage, water use and its cost. Members of the community are welcome to attend and the meetings will be between 18<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> November. An email can confirm attendance.

## Q&A

Mr Carl called for questions:

- Ms McGinn complimented the speaker on a very good presentation which provided a good insight into the study and the issues the community needed to address. This was received with a round of applause. Ms McGinn asked of the differences in the rainfall in the various catchments. A - The Tennent area is very similar as Googong as both are in rain shadow areas. Tennent does not have a high yield. The best yield is from Cotter but this will be down for many years as new vegetation growth will extract water.
- Is there a push to increase the use of grey water? A-- The increase in the use of grey water is an option in another study looking at managing demand. The cost with grey water is the provision of a dual reticulation system which can be expensive. In addition the treatment adds chemicals and there is an impact on soil and the environment.
- Does dual reticulation have an equity concern? A -- Yes, new housing estates, like Molonglo Valley may have it and older houses are paying for it but not benefiting. ACTEW Corporation is aware of the inequity issue and it is being considered. Perhaps open space and sports fields could be the target for grey water usage.
- Is there a real benefit in installing rainwater tanks in backyards? A - Rainwater tanks have at first the impact in reducing stormwater runoff and decreasing flows in urban streams. There is less water returning to the Murrumbidgee through this route. Given the cost of a tank versus the cost of water it is probably not cost effective, although it does make people feel good as they are contributing to reducing the water they are using from taps.
- Do we have a problem? A - Yes a very good question. There may be a climate change risk and we are not prepared for it. The example of Perth indicated that they did not know of the change until they were well into it. There has been substantial community concern over the lack of management of the water supply in Perth. We could have a 20% reduction in inflow, perhaps, and an option on the supply side is do nothing and manage the demand side. Grey water from recycling is currently 3x more expensive. Continued restrictions may be an approach. Perhaps there is the consideration of factoring restrictions into a long-term plan, for example restriction 10% of the time. In 100 years thus would be ten years, perhaps 3 x 3 year droughts would not be far off the mark.
- A resident stated that they have a concern on the issue raised on dual reticulation in the Molonglo Valley. In a democracy we often pay for services not used, eg schools but we all contribute to the costs. Dual reticulation may be possible in Molonglo Valley. A- In an estate in Sydney called Rouse Hill there are 5,000 houses on dual reticulation. The recycling system is reverse osmosis. The residents are using more water than the system can provide. Usage is past the point of adequate, it is extravagant. It has not reduced the use of water but certainly reduced the water leaving the estate. There are many equity and water balance issues to be considered in the installation of a dual reticulation system in a housing estate.

- The quality of water leaving Canberra has not been covered. Has the River Murray Commission and other state governments been contacted and consulted? A -- Yes there have been preliminary discussions but these were put on hold in the caretaker period. It is expected that this will recommence soon. The Murray Darling Commission and ACTEW Corporation are in discussion on water rights and caps on water extractions.
- Is the price of water on a sliding scale? A -- Yes, the ACT was the first in Australia to set a sliding scale for the cost of using water and the current rates are 3 tiered. The ICRC sets the pricing for water not ACTEW Corporation.
- I agree with recycled water on open areas and playing fields but am concerned that Cotter Dam is Heritage listed and not able to be touched. Can I ask how much is the dividend that ACTEW Corporation has to pay to the ACT government? A -- The dividend payment is \$60M / year.
- Does a grey water reuse system have an impact downstream and on extraction? A - The issue with grey water is storage. An example is storing water collected when plentiful to use when needed. It is an issue of peaks and troughs. The key to grey water use in a household is to have a large storage reservoir otherwise after the grey water is all used it is potable water that is then used.
- Generally it appears people have accepted the restrictions and most are following the restrictions. What have been the results of surveys on the acceptance of restrictions? A -- The implications of the restrictions have been surveyed but not the attitude towards the restrictions. This is a new area of work we are looking at. There will be 300 20-minute telephone surveys and we are receiving about 20 emails a week on the subject. The 'values meetings' discussed earlier will also add information to our knowledge of attitudes to water restrictions.
- Is ACTEW Corporation able to make recommendations on catchment management? A -- ACT Environment is the manager of the catchments. We strive to achieve a balance of national parks management and water yield. At Googong there is less ability to manage the catchment because it is in NSW but we do have some influence on managing the foreshore area.
- My question is on the demand side management. Has there been any work done on the wastage in a household, for example running a shower until the hot water comes through? A -- Yes we have been in consultation with ACTPLA on improved housing design and locating hot water systems near the greatest point of use. There is also the process of talking to BEPCON as a means of educating house designers and architects as well as plumbers in water conservation design.

Mr Carl called an end to the questions and thanked Kirrily and Rebecca for their presentation.

### **Other Business**

Mr Carl called for other business.

## Stromlo Village

There is currently a call for comments on the proposed redevelopment of the Stromlo Village. Mr Carl advised the meeting that the Stromlo Village was not the collection of houses owned by ANU on Mt Stromlo but the houses in the North Duffy area between Waragamba Ave and Cotter Road. There seems to be some confusion that it is called a village but is adjacent to Duffy. It is expected that when construction commences in 2005 many residents will only then realise it is called 'Stromlo Village'. The houses will be moved down slope, ie towards Streeon Drive by about 100m to move them off Commonwealth land and ensure that all of the village is on ACT land.

## Eucumbene Drive / Hindmarsh Drive intersection

The WCCC has been in negotiations with Roads ACT for some months on the unsuitable design and construction of the driveway from the equestrian centre in Chapman into the intersection. There are various concerns on the alignment and the turning arcs for articulated trailers. The WCCC is meeting with Roads ACT tomorrow (Thursday).

## Community and Expert Reference Group (CERG) Meeting

The WCCC continues to be represented on CERG and there is a meeting tomorrow at 7.00pm at the community centre and residents are welcome to attend from 7.00 to 7.30pm. To advise attendance call Canberra Connect on 132281 ask for the Bushfire Recovery Unit.

## Cotter Road intersection

A resident raised the issue on the progress of the two lanes left turn from Cotter Road into Streeon Drive. Mr Carl indicated that the treatment of that intersection was part of the concept plans put forward if an aged care establishment was built on the land at the corner of Cotter Road and Streeon Drive. The treatment would involve improved turning lanes. As the 'Broadacre Estate' Study has not been released there is currently no knowledge of what the Government's intentions are for that land.

## DV 200

A resident advised the meeting that he had undertaken a random poll of 60 residents in his local area (Holder) regarding DV200 and the implications it would have for higher density residential development. His results were that only 1 person had heard of it. Ms McGinn responded indicating that people appear to become aware of the impact of legislative changes only when development commences in their area. Mr Sutherland advised that under DV200 there may be developers who 'push the envelope' by including basements and attics.

The resident suggested that the WCCC revisit DV200 and inform residents of the potential implications.

Ms Deb Foskey (MLA elect) advised the meeting that as part of DV200 there is a provision for a review after 2 years. This would probably occur in mid 2005. Ms McGinn indicated that DV200 appears to be a one-size-fits-all approach and while the solution may suit inner Canberra its application in other suburbs is having unintended consequences. The WCCC would participate in the review of DV200.

Mr Carl called for additional other business, as there was none forthcoming he closed the meeting and thanked the guest speakers and residents for their attendance.

Meeting closed 9.30pm

Next Regular Meeting

Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> November – **Emergency Services Authority**