



**Office of
Environment
& Heritage**

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Our reference : DOC14/304576
Contact : Jennifer Charlton
8837 6311

Ms Karen Jones
Director, Infrastructure
Department of Planning and Environment
GPO Box 39
Sydney NSW 2001

Attention: Belinda Scott

Dear Ms Jones

I refer to your invitation to the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) to comment on the exhibition of Sydney Water's Modification Request for Modification to the Picton Water Recycling Plant.

OEH provides comments on biodiversity and Aboriginal cultural heritage values in Attachment 1.

Should you have any queries in regard to this correspondence please contact Jennifer Charlton, Conservation Planning Officer, on 8837 6311 or by email at jennifer.charlton@environment.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely,

S. Harrison 27/01/15

SUSAN HARRISON
Senior Team Leader Planning
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ATTACHMENT 1. Public Exhibition of the Environmental Assessment (EA) for Modification to the Picton Water Recycling Plant, Section 75W modification application

The public exhibition documents include Appendix C to the EA which is titled *Picton Sewerage Scheme Modification Aboriginal Heritage Assessment* (Kelleher Nightingale Consulting Pty Ltd November 2014).

1. Biodiversity

1.1 Construction and Operational impacts

OEH is satisfied that potential direct and indirect impacts on biodiversity values have been considered with respect to the 'construction' of the proposed Picton Water Recycling Plant (WRP) upgrade.

OEH notes, however, that the full suite of potential 'operational' impacts on biodiversity values has not been assessed as the EA states that the preferred option for the management and/or reuse of additional effluent generated by the amplified Picton WRP will be subject to a separate assessment process. Potential options for the management and/or reuse of the additional effluent have been identified in the EA as: additional storage; additional irrigation areas outside of the existing boundary of Picton Farm; an increase in discharge to Stonequarry Creek; and, a new discharge to the Nepean River.

Generally, OEH would expect that all potential aspects of a proposal should form the one application. Should the Modifications be approved as currently proposed (i.e. without nomination of an appropriate option to manage and reuse the additional effluent generated), OEH would expect that:

- any preferred option for the management and/or reuse of additional effluent be assessed for potential direct and indirect impacts on biodiversity values including threatened species, populations and ecological communities;
- areas of native vegetation would be avoided. Nearby endangered ecological communities that should be avoided include Cumberland Shale/Sandstone Transition Forest (i.e. Shale Sandstone Transition Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion) and Cumberland River Flat Forest (i.e. River-flat Eucalypt Forest on coastal floodplains of the NSW North Coast, Sydney Basin and South East Corner bioregions);
- appropriate setbacks from watercourses are employed; and,
- operation of the amplified Picton WRP would not commence until the preferred option for the management and/or reuse of additional effluent had been identified, assessed and approved.

1.2 Biodiversity Offsets

The EA states that a "*biodiversity offset is not considered necessary to compensate for the minor and localised residual impacts of the proposal on planted vegetation.*" It is unclear to OEH why the planted vegetation was established. The planted vegetation, which consists of native species indigenous to the area, occurs around the boundaries of the existing Picton WRP and according to the EA, was all planted around the same time about ten (10) years ago. The Department should seek clarification around the establishment of the planted native vegetation and whether it was required as a condition of approval for the original establishment of the Picton WRP. If the vegetation was planted as a condition of approval, further consideration of its removal, including potential offsetting requirements, is required.

1.3 Water quality monitoring

OEH notes that Sydney Water undertakes water quality monitoring at three locations in the study area:

- N911 Stonequarry Creek, downstream of Picton WRP;
- N92 Nepean River at Maldon Weir, upstream of Stonequarry Creek; and,
- N91 Nepean River at Maldon Bridge, downstream of Stonequarry Creek.

OEH expects that water quality monitoring would continue under operation of the amplified Picton WRP and may even increase depending on the preferred option for management and/or reuse of additional effluent.

2. Aboriginal Cultural Heritage

OEH is satisfied that the Aboriginal Heritage Assessment prepared by Kelleher Nightingale Consulting Pty Ltd dated November 2014 has considered the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage (ACH) values present in the study area relevant to the Picton WRP upgrade. Further, the report has provided for appropriate measures to ensure that ACH sites (particularly SQ1) will be appropriately protected, managed and avoided should the "irrigation" option for reuse of additional effluent be pursued; OEH supports the adoption of this approach.

(END OF SUBMISSION)