

Submission regarding Macquarie River to Orange pipeline project

OBJECTION

Ref No: 10_0235

Attention Belinda Scott

The Macquarie River to Orange Pipeline project EA has in my opinion failed in giving a true and honest assessment in the damage this will project will cause the Macquarie River and the aquatic ecology!

Orange City Council (OCC) I believe has made many misleading statements.

1 The pipeline has been approved and will be connected to Suma Park Dam by December 2012

(Obviously false)

2 The pipe line will only extract water in periods of HIGH FLOWS above 30 ML. NSW Office Of Water has a flow chart that shows low flows in a unregulated river as is the Macquarie River end at 200 ML before being classified as a moderate flow .

OCC have reports that show a river that is in reality dry can be shown on paper to be a raging flow?

Originally OCC set a trigger level to start pumping which was 30 Mega Litres, from this they would remove 40 % of the daily flow leaving an 18 ML flow in the river which would not run above the vast sand and gravel bars above Burrendong Dam (a water storage dam downstream that holds 1,188,000 ML).

OCC made many media releases stating they would only extract at these high flows and many people believed they would only take water when the river was in flood.

A 30ML flow in a tributary of the Macquarie River (Turon River) Virtually dry and in stress





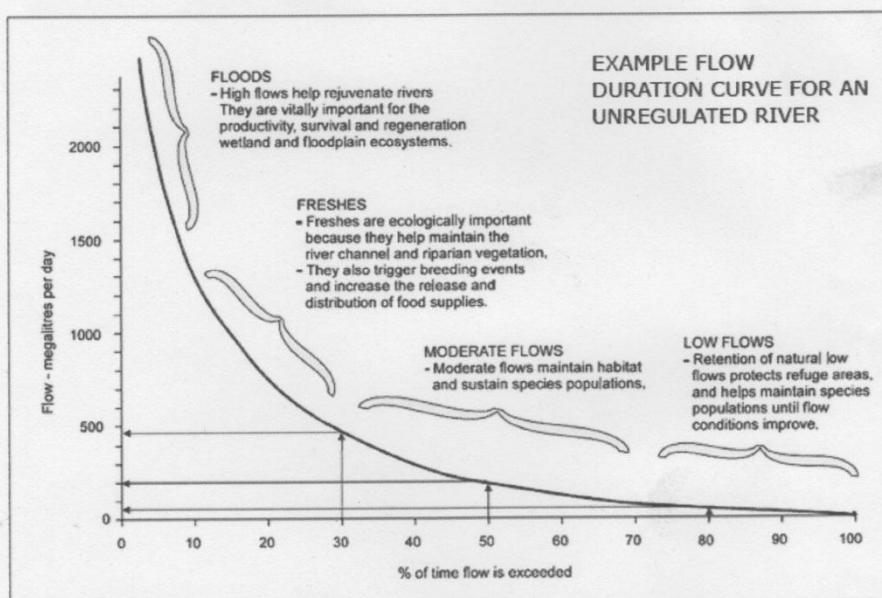
Department of
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Rivers

The environmental rules are designed to provide water for the environment across a range of flow events from floods to very low flows. The following diagram illustrates the importance of different flow ranges to a river's environment.



In addition to the cap on extractions in the Murray-Darling Basin, NSW has embarked on a process of allocating water to the environment. The economic and social development of NSW relies on the assured water supplies that are provided by our water storages. It is therefore not possible to return our rivers to their natural condition. However, in NSW we have now prepared statutory [water sharing plans](#) for most of the major river systems, protecting both the total volume of water for the environment and the natural variability in flows that is the low flows, moderate flows, freshes and floods. The environmental rules in the water sharing plans are designed to:

<http://www.water.nsw.gov.au/Water-management/Water-sharing-plans/Environmental-...> 3/06/2012

Note: the retention of low flows 200ML and below helps maintains species populations until flows improve!

The book "A canoeing guide to New South Wales" ISBN0 646 00264 3 page 35 gives minimum levels measured on the Bruinbun gauge to attempt canoe along the river in the pump proposal area .

Quote "minimum river height at Bruinbun is .05 m; a good level is 0.8 -1.2 m "

A 0.5 metre height on the Bruinbun gauge has a flow equivalent to 300 ML per day.

This is a 3000 % increase on what OCC say is a high flow and at this level you will still have to drag a canoe across rocks and gravel, the same rocks and gravel fish also have to negotiate!

This is a 46 ML flow in the Macquarie River Measured on the Bruinbun gauge



One can see why it is not recommended to try and canoe this section on levels below 0.5 metres or 300 ML!

The Macquarie River which is formed by the meeting of the Fish and Campbell's Rivers is silted and degraded around Bathurst and subject to water extraction and as such is in pretty poor condition.

A fishing competition held in November last year seen nearly one tonne of European carp caught, One Golden Perch, several Redfin and two trout.

Travelling downstream the Macquarie River receives an inflow of treated effluent from the Bathurst Treatment works of around 9ML per day. (Currently Orange, Blayney and Millthorpe send their treated effluent to Cadia Gold Mine, OCC are contracted to send up to 10 ML per day to Cadia)

The fishing improves where the river receives an increase in water flow and does so the further it gets away from Bathurst picking up Evans Plains Creek and numerous others eventually also taking the waters of the Turon River before running into Burrendong Dam .

The section of river below the junction of Evans Plains Creek to the backed up waters of Burrendong Dam is contained in a narrow rocky gorge which during floods boils out the sand and gravels creating deep rocky holes which are home to many species of aquatic animals and fish.

It was this section of river that NSW DPI Fisheries selected as a pristine section of river to implement Trout Cod Recovery Program, long before OCC planned on using the river for part of their NORMAL water supply as stated by Nick Redmond from OCC not for Drought relief as was the original stated purpose.

2009 saw the first release of Trout cod fry into the section of river that is to be affected by the pipeline. Indeed Trout cod fry were released into Gardiners Water Hole, the largest water hole above Burrendong Dam and probably the most important refuge hole in the upper Macquarie River.

2012 has seen captures of Trout cod at a size that they are mature enough to begin natural breeding.

This Trout cod was caught in Gardiners Hole by the land owner's son



Trout cod are being caught by local anglers and reported on a regular basis, most unsure of what these unusual fish are. NSW DPI Fisheries have now got signs to install along the Macquarie River informing anglers that Trout cod inhabit the waters.

Rod Harrison, one of Australia's most well-known angler and author in May of this year caught a Trout cod on a lure while fishing for Murray cod.

Cod season opens 1st December 2012 and it is expected that many more reports of Trout cod captures will flood in.

We are on the brink of a fantastic recovery of a species of fish first described by George Evans when he discovered a river full of so many fish he called it "Fish River" the fish George Evans seen were Trout cod.

If OCC are allowed to pump from this relative pristine section of river then we will see the destruction of this species from this river again.

OCC have terrible demonstrated land care practices on water ways in their LGA.

In appendix G Aquatic Ecology they picture a much degraded Willow and weed infested Summerhill Creek below their water storage Suma Park Dam.

To me OCC are trying to convey the sad state of Summerhill Creek and that no real damage could be done to a creek so degraded now, unfortunately the state of the creek has a lot to do with OCC!

GHD in their presentation show a Flooded Macquarie River, trying to convey a river of immense flows (only sometimes)

This flow is 8 ML above their 38 ML trigger point? They want to extract a further 12 ML from this?



Cardno has a picture taken from the bottom of Gardiners Water Hole on the majority of the cover pages in the EA. Gardiners Hole has a capacity of between 80 -100 ML .

OCC employed two aquatic consultants to sample the fish species and numbers in the river.

The first consultant was GHD and they admitted to the land holder Paul Smith that they were totally unprepared for the task at hand, no boat, no canoe, no boat mounted electro fishing unit.

GHD recovered four Endangered Freshwater Catfish while sampling a section of river they were told would be the extraction point, this was at the bottom of what is known as Little Ripple Hole.

Cardno was the next aquatic consultant to be employed by OCC; Cardno indicated they would only be doing a "Snap Shot" survey.

This survey was conducted during a flood period and again could not give a true and accurate assessment of the species in the river.

Their report is for an extraction point at the bottom of Gardiners Hole at the junction of Boshes Creek. Two different areas sampled / no consistency and to date OCC are unsure of where the extraction point will be!

Cardno did capture six Golden Perch and One Redfin in a gill net but then incorrectly recorded the fish sizes (page 29 app G aquatic ecology) as only 1/10 th their true size .

The fish were measured using fork tail length which is also incorrect as Golden perch have round tails.

Their findings were that the native fish species were not diverse; this is absolutely incorrect as we have documented evidence of large populations of Murray cod, Trout cod, Golden perch, Freshwater catfish and smaller populations of Silver perch and Freshwater Blackfish.

Remembering GHD was unprepared, had no boat and could not set nets across the river.

Cardno visited during a flood and struggled with high water.

Their findings also state " No Threatened Species Found " again this is incorrect as GHD had caught four Freshwater Catfish and Cardno recovered one Freshwater catfish , these five fish are part of a larger population / community as the angling clubs regularly catch Fresh water catfish while fishing for other species . These are a threatened species under the NSW FM act!

Pages 15 and 16 List area's that Murray cod have been released in the upper Macquarie; again many of these sites have no relevance to the Macquarie River as they are on the Cudgegong River!

The opponents have input from experts that have local knowledge of the river

Dr Nathan Miles

Dr John Harris

Their findings vary to the extreme opposite of those who were employed by OCC; they will be making their own submissions.

Summary.

The findings of the EA are based on inadequate sampling by both GHD and Cardno.

The statement that no threatened species encountered is to me offensive as the effort that both consultants put in was in my opinion very poor and possibly reflected what was wanted by them by OCC.

There is a very diverse number of species of native fish in the Macquarie River.

A video can be seen here <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ZavUJ2kkno> which shows many threatened Murray cod as well as Golden perch being caught in the study area!

This picture shows NSW DPI with a tanker full of Trout cod about to be released into the proposed pump hole "Gardiners "



OCC constantly refer to only taking .05 % of the River Flow.

Again this is a statement to deliberately mislead.

12 ML taken from a 38 ML flow = is nearly 32% of the daily flow!

OCC state the ANNUAL flow of the river is 304,042 ML or a mean daily average of about 833 ML PER DAY, why would OCC want to pump at 38 ML if their true intention is not to pump during extremely low flows when the river itself is in survival mode?

NSW OFFICE of Water has different figures to what OCC have.

Records from 1947 -2010 on the Macquarie River at Bruinbun gauge number 421025 show the mean daily flow is actually 1,162 ML per day. OCC have indicated that they want to pump from this very poor flow when it is reduced by nearly 97 % , 38 ML , AGAIN proof of their true intentions to pump at very low flows when the river is actually in stress .

If OCC were being honest they could set a TRIGGER POINT at say 50% of the Mean Daily Flow which would be 581 ML.

Why won't OCC do this? Because if the river has that amount of water in it then the odds are that OCC's Suma Park Dam is also flowing over (as it has been now for over two years) and they have nowhere to put it.

The truth of the matter is OCC need to repair their dam wall at Suma Park and increase the height of it the 1.8 m as was approved back in 2005 and meant to have begun construction in 2006.

How desperate were OCC for water during the drought? OCC were down to two years supply when the drought broke, their water storage Spring Creek Dam had been drained for repairs (what poor organisation) and when Cadia Goldmine threatened to scale back or close down due to lack of water (they use about 8 times daily then the city of Orange uses per day) then OCC voted to sell water from Gosling Creek dam (which could have been treated for potable water for Orange) to Cadia.

Our fears are that this pipe line if approved will be used to send more water to Cadia Goldmine during the next dry period. Currently OCC send up to ten million litres of treated effluent to Cadia (free of charge) which prior to that happening was returned to the Macquarie River via Summerhill Creek.

I ask you please look very hard at the true facts of this proposal so we do not see the river which begins above Australia's oldest inland city , is not destroyed the full length of its course .

Please save this very small, diverse and near as pristine as we can get section of river for now and future generations.

Regards

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