

Submission Re Macquarie pipeline:

Macquarie River to Orange pipeline project/Orange Drought Relief Connection

Ref No: 10_0235

Deadline: Monday 15 October 2012

Send submission to: belinda.scott@planning.nsw.gov.au

Or online:

http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view_job&job_id=4475

Dear Sir / Madam

We wish to register our substantial concerns regarding the Macquarie pipeline project.

These concerns are outlined in the following points:

- As landowners on the Oakey lane portion of the proposed route, we are very worried about excess noise from the proposed pumping station on the southern end of lookout Lane. Despite council assurances that noise will be minimal, the proposal outlines pumping on average 19 hrs per day (page ix), however landowners have been told this will be up to 23hrs per day, which may not be much more than the supposed ambient noise but will be constant and without rest even at times when the environment would normally be quiet- i.e. at night.
- We are also concerned about erosion along the route of the pipeline. A large amount of the proposed route traverses highly dispensable soils, which we do not believe the council has made adequate allowance for. This is evidenced by the erosion which has occurred in places close to the route as a result of Testra underground cables which required much less disruption of the soil.
- We are very concerned about weeds along the pipeline route. Wherever the soil is disturbed in this area, weeds such as Serrated tussock, Sifton bush, Patterson's curse, Bathurst burr, and Blue heliotrope germinate and flourish in abundance. Many species of weeds that occur in one place along the route do not currently occur in others, for example Tiger pear and Blue heliotrope that exists closer to the river do not occur along Oakey Lane. We do not believe the council has made adequate provision to mitigate the spread of weeds along the route.
- The pipeline route, associated access roads and power line will result in disturbance in very unstable soils that are also very steep. This will potentially result in landslides and erosion particularly close to the river.
- As ratepayers in Orange we also are not happy with the use of Orange city funds to support a project that we do not believe will deliver the outcome (ie water security) that council suggests.
- The project is not justified because it has been planned to supply an artificially high water demand. The proposal is based on "unrestricted" average daily water use of 404 Litres/person/day that is much higher than recent year's usage in Orange (225L/p/day) and for comparable targets for other towns/cities.
- The pipeline will provide an average of 1616 ML/yr to Suma Park Dam (at a pumping cost of some \$800,000/yr). On average most of this – i.e. 1300 ML/yr of goes back over the dam wall to the Macquarie River upstream of the pump site. The pipeline only yields about a net 300 ML/yr to Orange's water supply. Just like a giant water fountain!

- There are other feasible sources which can better provide for Orange's water security, at a lower cost and which are far less environmentally damaging. The total water available from these sources is over 5000 ML/yr on average. Orange Council has selectively and unfairly dismissed these options. The original CENTROC report did **not** recommend the Macquarie pipeline option as a water security option for the region.
- Orange city council has failed to consider and bring into public debate the concept of sustainable city size. There has been an assumption that Orange should grow and continue to grow indefinitely, and at as fast a rate as possible. Local public opinion has not been considered at all, no debate has occurred. The question of growth should be considered. Perhaps we need to plan a sustainable city.
- The river is significant habitat for endangered Trout Cod, Murray Cod, Silver Perch and Catfish. The Environmental Assessment for aquatic ecology is seriously deficient in addressing the impacts on these fish. For example it visually examined only 500m of the 27+ Km of river to be impacted.
- Council has claimed that water will be used for the rural fire service to fight fires. As immediate past captain and secretary of the Mullion Creek brigade, we can see no use for this possible supply, because we already have plans to supply water for brigade needs. It is also of interest that no consultation from council with the local brigade has occurred.
- Council has also claimed benefits to landowners from power upgrades, however when questioned closely on this it transpires that landowners will in fact have to pay for any upgrades.
- Landowners along the route, particularly those in more remote sections of the route will be unfairly disturbed and harassed by the construct and ongoing maintenance of this pipeline. Many of these locals have particularly bought land away from people to avoid such disturbances. The council compensation proposals do not adequately consider such impacts.
- Council has knowingly and wilfully alienated landowner's along the route by misdirection and useless "consultation" during the course of the development of the EA. For example the supposed independent consultative committee set up by Orange city council, was chaired by a supposed independent – who was paid by council – and did not report accurately on meeting minutes or follow up in any meaningful way on any actions put forward by landowners.
- Not only the pipeline but the necessary upgrade of the power line will impact upon locals, for example there is a current proposed power line route that will dissect a landowner's airstrip, rendering it inoperable.
- How can the council use the Aquatic Ecology report when it states that "The survey undertaken was not intended to serve as a baseline for impact assessment." Orange Council has selectively used out-of-date advice on protecting unregulated river environments from the NSW Office of Water to justify the project. Council has ignored other policy requirements which could significantly impact on the operation, yields and the viability of the pipeline.
- The supposed consultation that the council has undertaken during the process so far has consisted of council telling landowners what is going to happen. There has been no true consultation, just 'tick a box' meetings that the council has held to supposedly meet requirements.

- Landowners along Oakey lane have repeatedly suggested that the pipeline would have less impact upon landowners, the spread of weeds, erosion and the local environment, if the route was to traverse under the carriageway of Oakey lane. Council has consistently refused to seriously consider and investigate this option.
- The proposed extraction of water from the upper Macquarie River at low flows will disrupt fish passage and degrade important habitat values. Despite the release of the EA, Orange Council has yet to confirm the pipeline route to the river with 4 different locations still being considered, each with differing impacts and costs. This invalidates this significant part of the EA.
- The pipeline route will destroy important roadside vegetation that provides wildlife corridors and habitat in an area where a lot of the vegetation has been cleared.
- A regional water supply solution, which services more than the needs of Orange, needs to be developed using state and federal grant monies in an ecologically sustainable manner.

References

- <http://www.environment.gov.au/water/policy-programs/urban-reform/nuw-planning-principles.html>
- Orange City Council Macquarie River to Orange pipeline project Environmental assessment August 2012.

We trust that the concerns we have that are outline above will be given due consideration as part of the assessment of the EA for this project,

Yours sincerely

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