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Poor communication, or is it Snowyhydro's non-cooperation.

Last Tuesday 12 November I asked at the Talbingo Supermarket if a USB containing the Snowy 2.0 Major Works EIS had arrived. The answer was no, but there were 10 USBs and a hard copy of the Modification 2 Assessment Report, Exploratory Works for Snowy 2.0. Dated 17 October 2019.

I had originally asked Planning NSW's Anthony Ko for a USB of the Major Works EIS at a local Talbingo community meeting held with Planning NSW on 16 October 2019. I explained difficulties I had with trying to download the data due to poor computer speeds and the cost of using public computers locally for extended periods of time. Anthony said he would request Snowyhydro provide a USB to the local Supermarket for me to pick up. In the three weeks that followed up to closing of submissions on 6 November, I still haven't received the requested USB.

Anthony provided an extension of time for my submission on Snowy 2.0 Major Works EIS until the end of November. Obviously without the data I have been unable to make my submission.

Recommend: I be given an extension to comment on the Snowy 2.0 Major Works EIS lasting for at least three weeks from the time I receive the USB data from Snowyhydro.

Re: Snowyhydro's Proposed MOD 2 of Snowy 2.0 Exploratory Works

1. My first concern with MOD 2 Exploratory Works is that it defies the definition of a modification. Generally according to Collins dictionary one meaning of modification is to "change slightly" or another "a small change or adjustment." I can only describe MOD 2 as including some fundamental changes from the original Exploratory Works EIS particularly to do with the number of workers, the original footprint location, the transport strategy, the mode of tunneling and the proposed doing away with the Boat Ramp recreation area.

Snowyhydro is using the modification clause as a back door way of making fundamental changes and gets the added advantage of reduced time for scrutiny.

Recommend: That MOD 2 be rejected. That the terminology of the clause covering modification be changed and be made retrospective. Call MODs "Exploratory Works EIS Second version"/ "Third Version" etc., and let each version be treated as a new EIS for public consideration. In other words, extend the time for scrutiny these fundamental changes to the original proposal.

2. The following is a letter to politicians drafted by me as the secretary of the Talbingo Progress and Ratepayers Association. I am submitting this as my personal submission as I do not have the time to change the language to reflect that it is from me as an individual. I have not had time to comment on other matters of concern. Due to the limited time since receiving the data from Snowyhydro (12-11-19) and the closing date for submissions (21-11-19) it has not been possible to notify or consult widely with the community. This draft has gone to our executive but has not been endorsed by them

"It appears from this recent document Snowyhydro no longer wish to proceed with the above proposal. Given Snowyhydro's verbal notice to us late last year of their intention to close the Talbingo Dam spillway for "operational reasons" in 2021 and given a large part of our summer water based tourism revolves around water skiing, fishing and swimming all of which rely on accessing Talbingo Dam and that it is this segment of the industry that will be negatively affected by the above proposal, we resolved to express our concerns widely regarding the insufficiencies with the above proposal. In light of the recent decision to withdraw the above proposal and the now imminent possibility of the spillway being closed to public access our executive resolved to try to effect a more positive and sustainable outcome both economically and socially for the future of our town.

Background:

We are a village of approximately 300 residents surrounded by NSW Crown forests in the northern foothills of the Snowy Mountains. Our closest town for shopping is Tumut which is 43 kms away. Demographically we are made up of National Parks and Snowyhydro employees, and a large number of retirees who can spend months away grey-nomading.

Economically we are almost entirely reliant on tourism. This industry maintains a Service Station, Supermarket, Gulf Club, and a range of rental accommodation. There are many holiday homes whose owners mostly come from Wagga Wagga and Canberra.

During the holiday seasons, Easter, Christmas and the Snow season, our population can expand to in excess of 2000 people.

The Closing of Talbingo Dam spillway

Historically the Talbingo Dam spillway became a popular destination for local swimming after Snowyhydro closed Jounama Pondage as a swimming area. Jounama Pondage had been a swimming area for locals for many years prior. The reason given for that closure was the changing levels of the pondage and the turbulence when generating power. When asked by us, Snowyhydro provided no substantiating data to justify what we considered to be their unreasonable decision.

Snowyhydro encouraged the use of the alternative Talbingo Dam spillway by establishing toilets, a garbage service, picnic tables and a concrete footpath for the public to negotiate the gravel slope into the water.

Late last year Snowyhydro informed us they will be closing the present Talbingo Dam spillway, “for operational reasons,” in 2021. Again when asked by us, no substantiating data was provided to justify the closure. For some of their other spillways which are closed to public access there are occasions when they do overflow. Talbingo Dam spillway has never overflowed.

Snowyhydro told us late last year the proposed closure is unrelated to their Snowy 2.0 project.

Talbingo Dam spillway is presently where most of our summer water based tourism takes place.

(see photo from last season).

When, during drought there is little water in Blowering Dam, this area becomes the only alternative large body of water for this segment of recreational tourism for hundreds of kilometers.



'The Beach' Talbingo Dam Spillway January 2018

The following excerpt is from Modification 2 Assessment Report, Exploratory Works for Snowy 2.0. Dated 17 October 2019.

This Modification was not published for public comment until after our last meeting and therefore our concerns about losing the spillway for recreational access had been put to one side. We were under the (now false) impression we were getting Snowyhydro's (inadequate) Boat Ramp proposal.

3.5.1 Talbingo recreational area

As part of the Exploratory Works EIS assessment, the Talbingo recreational area was proposed to mitigate impacts on recreational users of Talbingo Reservoir from barge use and construction activities at the Talbingo Spillway.

It is now proposed to remove the requirement to establish the Talbingo recreational area as part of the Exploratory Works. As the proposed transport strategy no longer requires regular transport of materials and equipment via barge from Talbingo Spillway it is expected that impacts to recreational users will be significantly reduced.

The Talbingo Spillway barge ramp may be used temporarily during the installation of the communications cable,

however, this is expected to be a short-term impact only.

As impacts of barge use on recreational users of Talbingo Reservoir will be significantly reduced the proposed recreational area is no longer considered to be a necessary condition of approval. Schedule 3, condition 4 of the

Minister's approval requires:

*Prior to installing the approved barge infrastructure at the northern end of the Talbingo Reservoir, unless the Planning Secretary agrees otherwise, the **Proponent must develop a detailed plan for the new recreational area at the Talbingo Boat Ramp in consultation with Snowy Valleys Council and the NPWS, and to the satisfaction of the Planning Secretary.***

In preparing this plan, the Proponent must consider the feasibility and merits of incorporating a small area of the Kosciuszko National Park into the plan to enhance the new recreational area.

The plan must include:

- (a) the detailed layout of the new recreational area;*
- (b) a program to construct the new recreational area and minimise any disruption associated with the closure of the existing recreational area;*
- (c) an assessment of any additional impacts associated with the plan; and*
- (d) a program to keep the local community informed of any:*
 - closures to the boat ramp;*
 - closures to the existing swimming area; and*
 - restrictions to waterway access on the Talbingo Reservoir.*

Modification 2 proposes to remove this condition of approval as changes to the project transport strategy are expected to negate impacts to recreational users of Talbingo Reservoir.

Should the Planning Secretary agree to continue with the requirement of the new recreational area at Talbingo Dam Boat Ramp we wish to point out our concerns regarding this proposal.

1. The funding proposed is inadequate for a satisfactory replacement of the existing Spillway area;
 - a) Increased parking area for adjacent to the boat ramp would be required
 - b) Accessing the new area from the parking area has serious high risk safety issues and mobility issues for families, and the disabled as they would need to negotiate an operating boat launching area.
 - c) The dam level is predicted to rise and fall by up to 9 meters when generating . There is no provision of an acceptable access for swimmers, particularly children to the changing water levels..
 - d) Even when the dam is full there is no provision of shallows for children or inexperienced swimmers for the proposed swimming area. The drop off as proposed would be steep and the water deep.

Should the Planning Secretary accept Snowyhydro does not need to proceed with the new recreational area at Talbingo Dam Boat Ramp and Snowyhydro follows through on what they have told us and closes the Talbingo Dam spillway, we believe the outcome both economically and socially for the future of our town will be dire.

To address this we propose a Talbingo community meeting on the Wednesday 11 December at the Talbingo Country Club at 2 pm to bring these matters to a wider audience and we are asking you to attend

Could you please let us know ASAP so that we can notify which dignitaries will be attending.

Our most preferred option would be an assurance for the continued use of the Talbingo Dam spillway”

Yours sincerely, Gary Bilton.

