

I object to the proposed breach of the offset methodology chosen to address the ecological impacts of this development.

The discounting proposed for the required ecological offsets (Appendix F2 - 5.3.3 Proposed Offset for the Project) is not justified. The proponent proposes an offset comprising 50% of the ecosystem credits indicated in the BioBanking Assessment.

The reasons presented for offering just *half* of the required offsets are:

- 1) The vegetation to be destroyed is degraded
- 2) Net-Loss offsets are permitted in principle
- 3) Some Forest Red Gum woodland will be retained and restored on site
- 4) Restoration of Reedy creek will redress impacts on Southern Myotis

Each of the reasons presented are unfounded. To respond to each in turn:

- 1) The degraded nature of the site has *already* been automatically factored into the BioBanking offset calculations. If the site were intact the offset requirements from the BioBanking Calculator would be greater than the 259 credits currently required.
- 2) The BioBanking scheme *already* provides a net-loss scenario in practice; in fact it requires net-loss at a landscape scale in order to operate although the level of loss is mitigated to a minor degree through restoration works.
- 3) The woodland retained on site is irrelevant to offset requirements. The offsets calculated are for the woodland proposed for destruction and are not discounted by vegetation retained. On the contrary, even with proposed restoration works the vegetation retained will substantially deteriorate as an inevitable result of the nature of the proposed development. Rather than discounting the offset required, the applicant should be required to offset the damage to the vegetation retained as well.
- 4) The site in the context of the proposed development will not even approach the habitat requirements for Southern Myotis. Irrespectively it is not valid to consider the vegetation retained (which will have little to no ecological value in its industrial context) as in any way mitigating the vegetation destroyed.

I strongly urge NSW Planning & Infrastructure to maintain the integrity of the BioBanking assessment and require a full offset. Breaching the offset methodology would constitute a serious precedent and compromise any future ability to maintain any standards in this regard. The BioBanking scheme is already the compromise - we cannot provide endless concessions to environmental standards in what is now a Critically Endangered ecosystem.

## SSD 5248

### Gazcorp 813-819 Wallgrove Rd Horsley Park

BDEG Submission 15 May 2014

Gazcorp, a developer alleged in the ICAC to be a regular contributor to a secretive fund designed to avoid disclosure of developer donations to members of the government elected in 2011, seeks here to approval from that government for a development on a 52.2ha site at 813-819 Wallgrove Road, Horsley Park.

Such a method of behaviour, if proved, leaves little to the imagination as to intent.

Here we have a development proposal and accompanying documentation seeking the highest monetary gain with minimum environmental consideration.

This matter also demonstrates the farce that is community consultation to preserve a weighting toward development interest in a sorry generation of public administration.

"Hired Gun" consultants exist and are sought out by development proponents who have greater regard for quick and maximum financial return at cost to the environment. Those "Hired Guns" are given full access to a site and produce a report favourable to a development proponent's intention and the public have no means to affirm or deny what the consultant claims to have seen on site. The community is obliged to trust the consultant's assertions because the 'system' assumes integrity. That is a serious failing! All is well in the confected 'fairy dairy' land of government administration where, for the sake of expediency and serving of development interests, everyone is 'good' and no valid means exists to question whether consultants operate independently or in-step with unscrupulous developers. In such an environment no means exists to weed such consultants from the industry.

Peculiar assistance seems to have been afforded the proponent in the months leading up to preparation of the development proposal by way of Fairfield City Council failing to continue the Biodiversity Corridor that is Reedy Creek as it flows through and behind the Gazcorp development property. The Biodiversity Corridor zoning ends immediately south of the Gazcorp property boundary and resumes just beyond. What a boon for Gazcorp! How did that come about? It is odious to the senses.

The proposed development footprint, large as it is, necessitates destruction of remnant stands of Cumberland Plain Woodland (CPW) and a portion of River Flat Eucalypt Forest (RFEF). The former, in both Commonwealth and State environmental protection legislation is listed as a Critically Endangered Ecological Community. The latter is listed only in State environmental protection legislation. EPBC Act listed and TSC Act listed fauna species are said to have been observed on site.

Of 52.2ha of area, we estimate that only 33% is tree canopy yet the proponent intends retention of only about 7% of that tree canopy. This is a very poor environmental outcome.

Further, EPBC Act consideration is eliminated by the environmental consultant making an assertion we cannot test that Cumberland Plain Woodland (or Cumberland Plain Shale Woodlands) on site does not meet threshold criteria for consideration. We are expected to accept that minimisation assertion without being able to inspect the site.

In further minimising the value of remnant stands of Cumberland Plain Woodland on site the environmental consultant asserts the stands are highly degraded and we are expected to accept this as well. Exposing a fault in methodology and a leaning to the development proponent's wishes, the environmental consultant inappropriately uses the "degraded" woodland in the Biobank assessment calculator to determine offset credits at 50%.

Further, little consideration is given to the future of fauna said to be detected by the environmental consultant. Even to accept the findings of the environmental consultant it is clear that a high number of fauna inhabit or forage on the site. High in that figure is the number of fauna species likely to inhabit or forage around the rural dams on site. Seven species of frogs on site and more than a dozen water birds will be significantly impacted by the removal of existing rural dams in addition to the invertebrate species which have been established in population during the life of the rural dams. These species obviously exist in number because of the popularity of the site demonstrated by the quantity of water birds identified in the fauna survey, some of which show up in the photo on page 3-21 of the report. However, no consideration has been given to identifying the species of invertebrates inhabiting the dams and only scant regard is given in the flora and fauna survey to what humane measures will be demanded and overseen in the proposed draining and bulldozing of rural dams on site and the removal of trees and understorey from the site.

Should sustainability be ignored and the larger rural dam be approved for removed we urge humane procedures, overseen by an independent body such as WIRES and not a "Hired Gun" for the developer.

We urge the reduction in size of the warehouse proposed in the western part of the site to enable retention of the large rural dam in that area. It obviously attracts a high presence of water birds and frogs including EPBC Act listed bird species and a TSC Act listed species which would likely prey on some of those species.

Rural dams are identified in the NSW Urban Bushland Biodiversity Strategy (1997) as affording value for biodiversity conservation. Development pursuits across Western Sydney have introduced measures to ensure fast escape of stormwater along creeks the consequence has been less water retention outside of rain events. It has been rural dams which have played a vital role in sustaining water bird population and invertebrates in Western Sydney.

We question whether the removal of the larger rural dam is wise on another front - it undoubtedly has played a function in trapping water on site in events of flooding of Reedy Creek. The course of Reedy Creek immediately south of the Gazcorp property makes a near 90° deviation to the west before resuming a south to north flow along the western boundary of the site. It defies commonsense to believe that extreme flood events have not, in the past, caused the breaking of the bank of Reedy Creek at that point rather than make the 90° deviation to the west. Such events in future will result in the inundation of the proposed warehouse. The Hydrology Report seems silent on this.

Once again we urge denial of the warehouse size proposed in the western part of the site, retention of the rural dam and denial of any attempt to alter the bank of Reedy Creek or anything near the bank of Reedy Creek in the way of earthworks or levee to prevent or minimise flood flows of Reedy Creek into the proposed development site.

## **Summary**

Blacktown & District Environment Group Inc opposes the development proposal in its present form. Inadequate means exists to test the assertions of the environmental consultant, errant formulation of biobank credits, excess loss of Cumberland Plain Woodland, unwarranted removal of the larger rural dam and associated fauna, potential flood risk with size and alignment of warehouse in western part of the site underline our concerns and urging for rejection of this proposal.