Swati Sharma - Online Submission from Susan and Trevor GIBSON of Home owner at Wickerslack (object)

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From: Susan and Trevor GIBSON <stnosbig@bigpond.net.au>
To: Swati Sharma <swati.sharma@planning.nsw.gov.au>
Date: 20/12/2010 9:20 AM
Subject: Online Submission from Susan and Trevor GIBSON of Home owner at Wickerslack (object)
CC: <assessments@planning.nsw.gov.au>

Googong Township Water Cycle Project Environment Assessment

Comments submitted by Susan and Trevor Gibson, 151 Wickerslack Lane, Googong, NSW. Dated 19/12.2010

40 Years using Queanbeyan River Water

We have lived beside the Queanbeyan River since 1968 and used the unfiltered river water for our household for over 40 years. We bathed ourselves (and our babies) in it, cleaned our teeth, washed our vegetables and dishes etc in the untreated river water. We pump the water directly onto our vegetable garden. We have used the river for recreation, swimming in it daily during the summer.
We have suffered no ill health from the use of the river water and it is interesting to see in this report (page 101 Table 7.2) that the 75th % and maximum faecal coliform count for Wickerslack were 8cfu/100ml Why only one reading? Where are the figures for a longer period of time? The E. coli count below Queanbeyan City at the ACT border 75th percentile was 365 and the maximum was 14,000 cfu/100mls.This was obviously due to the spillage from the Queanbeyan sewerage works. - (mismanagement??human error?-wrong phone call?).
Over this 40-year period we have seen the ecology of the river change due to eutrophication and decreased river flow and cessation of the minor spring floods. All this has occurred since the Googong dam was built in 1975. However the water released from the Googong dam has been clear and sweet and free of faecal and storm water contamination.

Lack of Data on Fauna and Flora within the River.

It is known that biodiversity and the presence of indicator species can be used to measure the health of a river. Where is the data for the Queanbeyan River in this report?
The current ecological state of the Queanbeyan River is described (page 165) as ?slightly to moderately impaired condition when all sites below Googong are considered.?
The results on Table 11.5 show that the ecological health of the river at Wickerslack in Autumn 2005 and 2006 was good. (Where are the results for 2003 and 2004?) The macro invertebrate composition (taxa richness) and abundance of specific macro invertebrates and genera was similar to the reference (model?s expectations for the habitat) and scored A on the AusRivas banding scheme.
The report states
?The details, such as composition of detected macro invertebrates? are provided in a series of Ecowise reports (Refer to appendix F)?.
These have not been published with this report in appendix F, even though it is stated that they are ?important for comparison in any monitoring of potential impacts.?

Tables 11.4 and 11.5 are not sufficient data on this aspect of river ecology. There appears to be no data published in this report as a base line. So how can the impact (or non impact) and effect on the life within the Queanbeyan River of the storm water and excess recycled water from the Googong development be assessed?

Monitoring Station at Junction Googong Creek and Queanbeyan River.

This is to be set up 12 months before the operation starts (see Section 7.3 page 103) but the development is

predicted to start in June 2011 and no station exists, and no data has been collected in the last 6 months. There seems to be no statement on what will be monitored and what data is to be collected. Is it only nitrate, phosphate levels, turbidity and conductivity that will be measured? Will the fauna and flora in the Googong Creek and adjacent Queanbeyan River also be monitored? Who will be collecting the data? And how often will it be collected and analysed? What action will result from the analysis of the data?

Spread of weeds downstream

The report indicates that the Googong and Montgomery Creek Valleys are full of weed species. The recycled water and storm water released from the Googong will increase the flow along these creeks and exacerbate the spread of weeds (see page 168 Section 11.2.4 of the report). It is stated that the weeds should be cleared before the development starts.
?Weeds need to be surveyed, mapped and managed by selective removal? Who is responsible for this? - the private landowner, Queanbeyan City Council or CIC? Will this really happen before the development starts? The creeks are on privately owned land and we doubt that the owner will remove the weeds.

Development by stages and funding.

CIC will be designing and building to cope with the first 500 households. During this period they say they will be monitoring carefully and will then build the next stage to cope with the ever-increasing population at Googong. The running of the plant will be under the control of Queanbeyan Council officers, but there is no clear indication how the hand over will occur and the future relationship between the design, building, funding and management of future stages.
Where is the guarantee that the Queanbeyan council will come up with the money to build the required capacity before it is needed? Has Council pledged to fund this project for the next 25 years regardless of cost? Can future councils rescind such a pledge?

Control of development and correct management of the Plant.

How will the Queanbeyan Council ensure that builders and drainers do not connect storm water to the sewerage system? Who will be responsible for maintaining the infra structure of this system so that it never breaks down and spills into the Queanbeyan river, even in the event of bushfire destroying pumping stations, extreme weather storms causing the holding tanks to overflow, earthquake tremors to fracture the infra structure, not to mention human error which has been responsible for sewage spills from Queanbeyan?s existing sewerage works? Notoriously Councils find the money to react to an event or catastrophe, not to spend money to safeguard and prevent an event from happening.

Stormwater

We have concerns about the chemicals and pathogens in storm water and the recycled water (which will sometimes be discharged into the storm water) entering Googong Creek and the Queanbeyan River.
1. pesticides, fertilisers, nicotine and also chlorine for example
2. parasites from dog and cat faecal matter
3. human viruses and medications.

How will the Queanbeyan Council be monitored to prevent these pollutants from entering the waterways?

Pathogens in the recycled water.

This report states that pathogens, viruses, protozoa and bacteria will be removed from the recycled water. (See page 119(section 8.5.2.) The Table 8.2 shows log reduction requirements for pathogens in recycled water to be used for toilet flushing, washing machines and garden uses. Table 8.3 suggests that initially the processes may not reach the requirements for removal of viruses from the recycled water.
If we residents of Wickerslack continue to use the river water (as we have done so in the past 40 years) in our households, using it for bathing, cleaning our teeth, food preparation, washing dishes as well as clothes, we will definitely be exposed to human viruses from the recycled water being discharged into Googong Creek and the Queanbeyan River, even if it eventually reaches the levels required for recycled (not potable) water.

Storm Events.

This water sewerage and water recycling plant has been designed to cope with all wet weather events yet we have been told that all future weather patterns cannot be predicted because of climate change due to global warming. The storm patterns vary locally. The other night Googong Dam received 101mls of rain, Wickerslack 38mls in the same time period. What was received at the Queanbeyan Bowling Club? Their rain records were used to do the mathematical modelling and future predictions of storm events at Googong. How reliable is this model?

We are not satisfied that silt and pollutants will be effectively controlled from running off the building sites during development, and the urban area once it is built.
We believe increased erosion along Montgomery and Googong Creeks will also occur and large amounts of silt will be deposited into the Queanbeyan River.

Comments have been made that if more recycled water is released because of a storm event this (together with the storm water run off) would be diluted by water coming down the Queanbeyan River. This would only occur if the dam is 100% full and overflowing the spillway (a rare event which only happens once every 20 years).

Risk of Spills and Control of Storm Water.

Chemicals.
This development sets out methods of control of chemical spills of chemicals to be used in the water cycling plants. Who in the total life of this development will police that these chemicals are being stored correctly and that staff is being trained to handle these chemicals in any emergency that may arise during bush fires or severe storm events?

Sewage
The Queanbeyan City Council will be managing the new sewerage system and we have no faith in Council?s management on past history, and do not believe there will never be a spill of chemicals, fuels or sewage into the Googong Creek and Queanbeyan River.

This development plan in the risk assessment table 6.4 (page 89) states that changes in the water quality during the operation phase would be possible with major consequence. This means it would probably occur at sometime and would cause medium to long-term potentially irreversible impacts.
It states that failure of the treatment system and spill of pollutants will be rare and produce extreme consequences.

This means it would only occur in exceptional circumstances and cause long-term irreversible impacts.

It is essential that this recycling plant be over designed and built BEFORE the building development at each stage over the 25-year period. Aging infrastructure must be replaced before it breaks down because of old age.
It must be CORRECTLY MANAGED forever and no mistakes made (human or otherwise).
It is important to protect our Australian rivers for now and future generations, and an accidental spill MUST NEVER happen.

Health and Safety of Wickerslack Residents.

The Queanbeyan Council will not be able guarantee that in future there will (a) never be a chemical or sewage spill into the Queanbeyan River and
(b) the storm water run off from the development will not be degrading the river,
(c) the recycled water released from the development will not contaminate the Queanbeyan River with pathogens and possibly human medications.

Because the new Googong development will make the river water unsuitable for household and at times recreational use, we request that
(i) the Queanbeyan City Council be required in the near future, at their expense, to reticulate potable water along Wickerslack Lane, and thus safeguard the health and safety of these Queanbeyan residents.
(ii) the residents of Wickerslack be immediately informed if a spill occurs ?due to unforeseeable circumstances? so

they can cease to use the river for recreational purposes such as swimming and fishing.

Management plan of the Queanbeyan River Corridor

Finally we wish to draw your attention to Section 4 of the Management Plan of the Queanbeyan River Corridor published in 1999, and subsequently adopted by Queanbeyan City Council. (At this time Wickerslack was part of the Yarrowlumla Shire.)

It describes the section of river from the then City boundary into Yarrowlumla Shire to Googong Dam saying, ?The unit has limited impacts from urban development and contains the most natural areas of river below the dam.?

Now all management units along the Queanbeyan River Corridor will have to add to the list of threats the following,
?- Sedimentation from urban uses
- Storm water inflow, which lowers the water quality
- Sewage treatment works and the potential for overflow.?

Refer to section 4 that summarises in various tables the ?Values and Major issues of the Queanbeyan River Corridor.?

Under the section ?Water Quality and Environmental flows? it states.
?Clean water and ensuring flows in the river are able to sustain the diversity of wildlife are valued highly by the community because
- It is part of the natural environment and high quality is fundamental to the health of the environment
- It supports a healthy density and diversity of aquatic flora and fauna
- - It supports recreational activities and people would like to swim in it safely
- -People would like to be able to fish and eat their catch safely
- - It is attractive and forms a backdrop for the City and natural bushland.?

The following objectives to support the goal for water quality and environmental flows were recommended.
1 Ensure urban development does not adversely impact on water quality.
2. Adopt Best Practice environmental management measures.
3. Ensure regular management activities minimise adverse water quality impacts
4. Continue to improve water quality through improved catchment management at the catchment level including control point sources of urban run off.
5. Ensure environmental flows in the river provide sufficient quantity and quality to maintain aquatic life and river health.

We ask that the Queanbeyan Councils now, and in the future, will find the money and personnel and expertise to carry through the above objectives, manage the environment to protect the water quality of our Queanbeyan River for the present and future generations.
We ask the NSW Government to see that the Queanbeyan Council carries out the objectives of their management plan of the Queanbeyan corridor.

We ask this especially with reference to this new urban development of Googong.

Susan J Gibson and Trevor L Gibson
Queanbeyan Residents of Wickerslack Lane.

Name: Susan and Trevor GIBSON
Organisation: Home owner at Wickerslack

Address:
residential - 151, Wickerslack Lane,Googong,Queanbeyan NSW 2620
postal- PO Box 248. Queanbeyan NSW 2620

IP Address: cpe-121-223-197-110.lns3.civ.bigpond.net.au - 121.223.197.110

Submission for Job: #3119 Project Application for Stage 1
https://majorprojects.onhiive.com/index.pl?action=view_job&id=3119

Site: #1730 Googong Water Cycle Project
https://majorprojects.onhiive.com/index.pl?action=view_site&id=1730

Swati Sharma
Environmental Planning Officer

P: 9228 6221
F: 9228 6355
E: swati.sharma@planning.nsw.gov.au
