

Narara Ecovillage Co-operative Ltd – application to vary its WIC Act licences at Narara Ecovillage

1 September 2021

1 Topic

Narara Ecovillage Co-operative Ltd (NEV) has changed its approach to managing the community's sewage, drinking water and recycled water needs. NEV now intends to dispose of its sewage by transferring it to Central Coast Council's (CCC) sewage pumping station rather than recycling it for non-drinking uses. Drinking water will be supplied by CCC instead of treating dam water to supply drinking water to the community. The dam water will be treated to supply water for non-drinking water purposes.

NEV has applied to vary its existing network operator's licence (17_040) and retail supplier's licence (17_041R) granted under the *Water Industry Competition Act 2006* (NSW) (the WIC Act) to provide for these changes.

2 Changes requested to the existing licence

The applicant seeks to include a new sewer rising main connecting the scheme to Central Coast Council's (CCC) sewer main, extending the area of operations currently authorised by the licence.

Additional changes include:

- NEV is requesting a change to its network licence under "Authorised Person", nominating Innaco Pty Ltd to replace Aquacell Pty Ltd, to provide the necessary technical and organisational capacity to build and operate the water industry infrastructure licensed under the WIC Act.
- NEV is requesting a change to the Activities authorised by the licence:

- Remove the clauses permitting NEV to collect and treat dam water for use as drinking water. NEV will initially supply recycled water for its approved end uses from its drinking water supply from CCC. This will be replaced by a treatment plant to treat collected dam water for approved non-potable uses.
- Remove the clauses permitting NEV to collect and treat sewage from the scheme. It will instead transfer collected sewage directly to CCC's sewer for treatment and disposal and buy its drinking water directly from CCC.

These changes will be reflected in the new network licence.

3 Background

The licences were granted by the Minister administering the WIC Act on 4 July 2017. The scheme received development consent under Part 4 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act* (1979) (EP&A Act) from CCC for the water industry infrastructure that was approved under the current licence.

The scheme received commercial operation on 16 October 2018, to operate a temporary treatment plant to produce recycled water for use in toilet flushing and irrigation, and reticulation networks for drinking water, recycled water and sewage collection. We understand this temporary plant was never fully commissioned and has since been removed.

In 2019, NEV decided to remove the treatment plant from its operations and instead has signed agreements with CCC to dispose of collected sewage directly to CCC's sewer network and to obtain drinking water from CCC for drinking and for recycled water use within the scheme.

To enable this change in operations, NEV has constructed a new sewer rising main to transfer collected sewage from the scheme to CCC's sewer main in Research Rd, necessitating a licence variation to include the infrastructure in its approved area of operation.

With the removal of the treatment plant, NEV also ceased its contract with Aquacell and entered into a new arrangement with Innaco to provide technical and organisational capacity to operate and maintain the current water infrastructure and to design and construct any additional infrastructure to accommodate future needs.

4 Submissions

Information about the proposed variation to the Narara scheme is available on our [website](#).

Tell us what you think about the variation applications, by using the [Have your say](#) link on our website. Submissions close on 4 October 2021.

We will consider the variation applications and how they meet the licensing criteria and principles of the WIC Act. We will also consider all stakeholder submissions. Our report to the Minister will summarise our assessment of the variation applications and any submissions.