

Christopher Schumacher

GovRel/Local&RegLiaison/IPART
CS:RB

5 April 2017

IPART
PO Box K35
Haymarket Post Shop NSW 1240

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: WaterNSW response to IPART Issues Paper on Rural Water Pricing

As part of the IPART review into WaterNSW response to IPART Issues Paper on Rural Water Pricing, Oberon Council submits the following concerns about proposed changes to the Fish River Valley Customer Service Council which I also raised at the IPART hearing held at the Masonic Centre in Sydney 21 February 2017.

Currently Oberon Council has a seat and a voice at the CSC for our regional valley known as the Fish River Valley Scheme. The CSC has worked very well and effectively since its existence some several years ago.

The changes proposed by WaterNSW were announced to its customers at the last Customer Service Council Meeting on 28 February 2017, which raised concern of its members as WaterNSW prepares to have 1 licence and 1 individual representative from this Valley sit on its new 'Customer Advisory Group' panel? This proposal has been floated at the eleventh hour which is farcical and has caught all CSC members totally unaware of what may be considered insulting.

The issue for members on current Fish River Valley CSC raises concern in terms of representation through the proposed larger Customer Advisory Group 'CAG'. There are several different representatives that sit on the current CSC that provide valid input and feedback into competing interests that are shared as part of this group and the valley on a whole.

Concerns have been raised about having to nominate only 1 person from this valley to be a representative at a much larger group proposed as the 'Customer Advisory Group' (CAG), this is not seen as favourable nor fair in voicing the different needs of each of the organisations that sit on the current CSC.

It is further understood that the CAG will consist of other eastern sea board members as far as up as the Hunter and far down as South Sydney. This raises concerns about water security and future pricing for the existing regional area Councils and industry that rely heavily upon the reservoir known as Oberon Dam. As a Local Government Council, I think we know what is in the best interests of our individual Local Government Area's, and one voice (which may not be a Local Government representative in our case)does not represent the best interests of all parties in the proposed CAG model for the Fish River Valley.

Neighbouring Lithgow City Council has also raised non-representation as a major concern given many issues around the delivery of water through many complexities of the Fish River Valley system, the valley being a major supplier of water to several of their LGA Villages and in times of need the Lithgow Township of 20,000 people.

Speaking for Oberon Council, I have strong objection to potentially having WaterNSW response to IPART Issues Paper on Rural Water Pricing no representation for Oberon at the proposed new CAG. I see this proposal as unfair, it is not a broad enough representation of the Fish River Valley Customer Council group to have only 1 person at the CAG table. Oberon Council and its major industry relies solely on the WaterNSW Oberon Dam for its water security, this is the only major water reservoir that the township of Oberon has to provide a reticulated water source. Oberon Council has concern should the CAG and the Fish River Valley be changed or expanded, then there may be detrimental ramifications to the regional LGA of Oberon with added demand on the Oberon Dam supply through to the eastern metropolitan area of Sydney.

Therefore I conclude that Oberon Council (and I suspect other Customers in the Fish Valley System) at the very minimum would like to preserve their individual representation in a new CAG arrangement, should it proceed.

Thank you for this opportunity to put forward a submission as part of the IPART WaterNSW review, and trust that the concerns raised will be treated with some credibility.

Should you require any further information in relation to this matter, please contact Mr Chris Schumacher Works & Engineering Director directly ([REDACTED])
[REDACTED]

Yours Faithfully

Chris Schumacher
Works and Engineering Director