

WILLIAMS RIVER CARE ASSOCIATION INC.

A Registered Landcare Group

PO BOX 257
Raymond Terrace 2324



Hunter Water Corporation Licence Review (Matter No. 01/368)
Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of New South Wales
PO Box Q290
QVB Post Office
NSW 1230

Attention Mr. Michael Sedwell

fax. 0292908462

Dear Michael,

Review of Hunter Water Corporation's Operating Licence

Further to the Issues paper sent to us in July we would like to offer the following comment and suggestions.

The Williams River Care Association fnc. is a registered Landcare group based around the Seaham weir pool of the Williams River ,has approximately 50 members and has been involved in over \$400,000 worth of projects in the catchment since its inception ten years ago.

The Weir was put in place at Seaham to control tidal flow and create a fresh water pool from which Hunter Water could extract fresh water for storage in Grahamstaown Dam and distribution in the lower Hunter area. It is thus a critical resource/asset to Hunter Water. The weir pool has created a modified environment which we believe is still adjusting from its previous tidal flow to the current static status today 25 years since it was sealed. We believe it thus warrants special attention to create the healthiest possible environment in which fresh water can be maintained.

Several symptoms suggest that this is not yet so:

- Blue green Algal blooms and their potential toxicity.
- Lack of aquatic and Riparian vegetation due to inappropriate on land and on water activity management.
- Infestation of noxious weeds.
- Toxic pollution from human activities particularly in the urban areas of Clarence Town and Dungog.
- Flood impact for farm land in the weir pool area.
- despite the Healthy rivers Commission inquiry and advent of REP and TCM there has been no water quality improvement. (Hunter Water Corporation, Water Quality in the Williams River Annual report 1999/2000)

We believe that it is in the interest of the water consumers of the Lower Hunter that these issues be addressed as an ongoing mechanism of ensuring the best quality of water comes from the source rather than relying on the technology and cost of treatment. It is much safer, healthier cheaper and sustainable to take this approach.

NSW government, **on** behalf of the people, can contribute to **this goal** by including conditions in its licence to Hunter Water that ensure that it is committed and has incentives to significant and ongoing contributions to the health of the Williams River catchment and particularly **m** the short term to the restoration of the Seaham weir pool as a healthy, low flow, aquatic and riparian environment. Many records exists showing how the river was before the weir **was** put in place and obviously thousands of years of evolution created a healthy river possibly even able to cope with the human development of the last two hundred years. If we take it that the **weir** is here to stay and an **essential** resource to the social and economic well being of the Lower Hunter then we must decide what **sort** of environment we should encourage in the modified stream **and** plan to achieve this end in the shortest possible time frame.

We recognise that Hunter Water does currently make a contribution to the catchment through various activities however these are not statutory **or** regulatory **and** lack detailed goals , visions and **plans as** discussed above.

Hunter Water should be required to pay for the water it extracts from the Williams and Chichester Rivers thus providing **a** source for funding catchment improvement and an incentive to reduce extraction and consumption by its customers. More of the various categories shown on the current water bills should be linked directly to consumption.

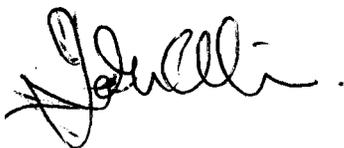
A catchment management **plan** needs to be funded which clearly outlines the environmental limitations and **a** vision for the catchment and particularly the weir pool in the Williams. Funding to achieve these goals could be dispensed through the Williams River TCM **Committee** with DLWC holding the purse. This would have an added bonus of increased focus and determination to the TCM which involves all the relevant stakeholders. Money should only be spent on improvements and maintenance and not compensation.

The whole of the weir pool should be considered a special reserve with staffing to assist with management activities eg, stock control, weed control and revegetation.

Hunter Water needs to be given responsibility for sewage treatment in Dungog **and** Clarence Town **so** that these activities are properly resourced and Hunter Water and its customers have an incentive for water demand minimisation **and** catchment quality improvement.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the licensing process.

yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Ellis', followed by a period.

John Ellis
President
ph. 02 **49964560**