

8 September 1999

The Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee
on Environment and Heritage
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Contact: Peter Davey
Our Ref: ajr:slc\letters\40-sec-parliament

Dear Sir/Madam

SUBMISSION ON CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT

The Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Trust is pleased to make the following submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage Inquiry into Catchment Management.

From a catchment management perspective the Hawkesbury-Nepean hydrological catchment is unique, relative to most other catchments in Australia.

This uniqueness is reflected in its strategic and economic importance to New South Wales and in the complex set of institutional arrangements which regulate and inform the management of its natural resources.

In terms of its strategic and economic importance, Committee members may not be aware that the Hawkesbury-Nepean:

- supplies 97% of the water used in homes and businesses of Sydney, the Illawarra, the Blue Mountains and the Central Coast.
- supplies 80% of Sydney's sand and gravel needs.
- supplies Sydney with much of its fresh fruit and vegetables and supports an agricultural industry with a farm-gate value in excess of \$1 billion.
- is home to almost one million people and continues to absorb most of Sydney's urban expansion and much of its waste (a further 0.3 million people will be living in the catchment by 2020).
- has scenic, cultural and recreational amenity of international significance and attracts up to three million visitors per year.

In terms of the institutional arrangements which regulate the management of the Hawkesbury-Nepean, Committee members may not be aware that:

- the Trust's role of *independent advocacy* is unique relative to most other natural resource and environmental management organisations throughout Australia.
- the New South Wales Government recently established the Sydney Catchment Authority to better protect the ecological integrity of Sydney's drinking water catchments (these catchments comprise part of the Hawkesbury-Nepean hydrological catchment).
- the 21 local councils which operate across the catchment now play a significantly increased role in catchment management as a result of the devolution of responsibilities from State to Local Government.
- a range of State Government agencies continue to administer a wide range of statutory instruments and policies which control or influence catchment management.
- the New South Wales Government recently commissioned a major inquiry into the Hawkesbury-Nepean through its Healthy Rivers Commission. Recommendations from that inquiry are in the public domain and are now under consideration by the New South Wales Government.

In this context, the Trust believes there would be considerable benefit in the Committee visiting the Hawkesbury-Nepean catchment as part of its inquiry process.

If such a visit was able to be included in the Committee's itinerary the Trust would be pleased to facilitate that visit.

The following attachment provides an overview of the Trust's role and more detailed information on catchment management in the Hawkesbury-Nepean can be provided should the Committee choose to visit this important catchment.

Yours faithfully

PETER DAVEY
Chief Executive Officer