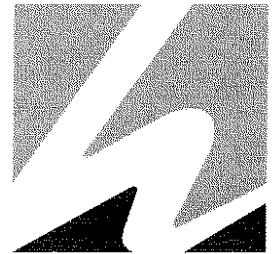
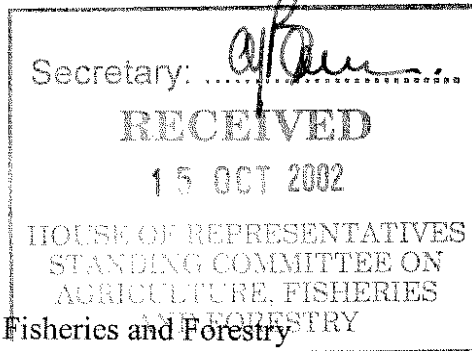


Hawkesbury City Council

Our Ref: GT150/015 Pt9

10 October 2002

The Committee Secretary
 Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
 Parliament House
 Canberra ACT 2600



366 George Street
 (PO Box 146)
 Windsor NSW 2756
 Phone: 02 4560 4444
 Facsimile: 02 4560 4400
 DX: 8601 Windsor

Emailed 14/10/02

Dear Sir

Inquiry into Future Water Supplies for Australia's Rural Industries and Communities

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry into Future Water Supplies for Australia's Rural Industries and Communities.

Hawkesbury City Council is located just over one hours drive from Sydney central business district, a half hour from Parramatta and less than half an hour from Penrith, Blacktown and the Hills District. It has well developed road networks linking North to Singleton, South to Penrith, East to Sydney and West to Lithgow, Katoomba and Western New South Wales. It has a young and growing population with a large percentage of households having children. It's current population is approximately 65,000 and is expected to grow in excess of 80,000 by 2015. Hawkesbury's main populated areas, those being Windsor and Richmond are located on the banks of the historical Hawkesbury River which flows through some of the most fertile lands located in the Sydney basin.

The Sydney basin, comprising of weathered shale, leached sandstone and rich alluvials, extends west from the Pacific Ocean to the Blue Mountains and South from the Hawkesbury Catchment to the Shoalhaven Catchment. It's soils have provided Sydney with much of its fresh produce since the beginning of European settlement. Currently, the region produces 40% by value, of the New South Wales vegetables and provides over 90% of Sydney's perishable vegetables and cut flowers.

Over the years, both Sydney base agriculture has grown and evolved in response to social, cultural, economic and infrastructural demands, changes and pressures. Right now, however, the region is at a cross roads as it battles the sprawling urban population growth.

Historically, the Hawkesbury area has always been well known as an important agricultural district. Its success in the past has been due to favourable rain fall, a reliable climate and suitable soil and geography. Many believe that the Hawkesbury can be the most important agricultural area in the state.

DX021001L273_K.doc

All communications to be addressed to the General Manager
 P.O. Box 146, Windsor NSW 2756

Website: www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au

E-mail: council@hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au

Hours: Monday to Friday 8.30am - 5.00pm Thursday 8.30am - 7.30pm

Where people make the difference.



The Hawkesbury area has a plentiful supply of land suitable for almost any farming use. The current agriculture and horticultural industry includes, but is not limited to, horse studs, cattle farming, fruit and vegetables, turf farms, mushroom farming, poultry, sheep, goats, deer, orcharding, dairying and cut flowers. The Hawkesbury is regarded as the mushroom capital of Australia, it is the largest producer of turf in New South Wales, the producer of 80% of the regions corn and the highest producer of vegetables in the Sydney basin.

As agriculture is such a major part of the Hawkesbury region, a community based project, aimed at improving the economic sustainability of local agriculture commenced back in 2000. This community based project is Hawkesbury Harvest incorporated with the Chairperson being Mr David Mason, who is the Officer in Charge at Windsor for New South Wales Agriculture.

While quality and quantity of water are major issues for agriculture in the Hawkesbury area, it affects both the inputs and outputs. Agriculture needs a good source of high quality water for irrigation of crops and animals. Agriculture can only cause water quality problems if it is not properly managed on the sight. The quality and quantity of both service and sub-terrarium (ground) water has important implications for the sustainability of agriculture in the Hawkesbury.

In the past, water has been freely available to farmers in the Hawkesbury. Farming methods and products have thus developed in a context where water is not a constraint. In the future, where sustainable water is now in limited supply, farmers will need to adapt both methods and products to reflect this new situation. Obviously, if agriculture is to be retained and encouraged in the Hawkesbury, access to water of an acceptable quality and supply is of paramount importance. It is understood that in the latest round of water allocations to food farmers under the State Water Management Act (2000), vegetable growers have been left with less than 50% of the water needed to grow their crops with no certainty of supply. The food growing lands of the Hawkesbury are becoming less productive because of the water license issues and farm dam restrictions, which are currently in place. There are some who would argue that the current restrictions mean that there is no future for agriculture in the region. Further restrictions that may be placed on water supplies through the current inquiry may further strengthen this argument.

With the constant pressure on land use in the Sydney basin and certainly in the Hawkesbury region because of the large demand on housing land, further restrictions being placed on the agricultural industry may see more farmers moving away from the land. This will allow the opportunity for developers to move in. Initiatives must be investigated so that the agricultural industry sees more value in staying on the land than selling that land for development. One initiative Council is currently investigating is the Topo-climate concept. The Topo-climate concept grew from a successful project in South Land, New Zealand, where soils and micro climates were mapped over 105,000 hectares in a three year program from 1998 costing \$4.2 million and employing 24 staff.



The New Zealand Government in 2000 brought into a 40% share in the Topo-climate South Project in partnership with five Southland Councils. Request for similar works from other regions in both Australia and New Zealand has resulted in a commercial company being developed to service the demand. Topo-climate Services officially opened its offices in Coffs Harbour in January 2002.

The threat of not allocating all farmers an equitable supply of secure water to continue their farm businesses in the Hawkesbury region may place into jeopardy the Topo-climate project being introduced to the Hawkesbury region. Without initiatives such as the Topo-climate concept being introduced, agriculture will once again struggle to hold its land from the ever increasing urban sprawl.

In conclusion, I again urge the Inquiry into considering no further restrictions on the Hawkesbury region, and look at increasing the usage allowed to the farmers due to its significance in being a major agricultural supplier to Sydney and other parts of New South Wales.

Yours faithfully

David Tuxford
Manager Administration

Direct Line: 4560 4426