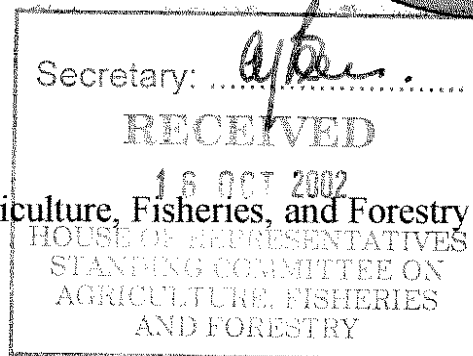
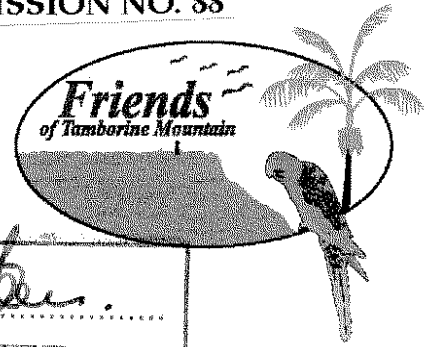


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To: The Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Submission to "The Inquiry into future water supplies for Australia's rural industries and communities".

The Management Committee of our Association has had the benefit of reading the submission prepared by the Tamborine Mountain Progress Association Incorporated, and we wish to endorse the Association's comments, and the suggestion that Tamborine Mountain is a suitable site for a case study into the sustainability of its locally self-sufficient water supply to provide a firmer basis for similar supply schemes elsewhere.

We would also like to make the following further comments:-

1. Members of our Association are not in favour of the introduction of reticulated water to Tamborine Mountain but we are concerned about the sustainability of the present system and in particular:-
  - 1.1 That the existing capacity of household rainwater storage is insufficient during dry times, particularly for families, who are forced to buy groundwater from the water carriers. (This, of course, could be remedied if Council were to increase the present minimum rainwater storage capacity of 31,500 litres.)
  - 1.2 We do not know whether the disposal of residential effluent is having an adverse impact on the quality of the groundwater resource at the present time.
  - 1.3 We also do not know whether the present level of unregulated extraction of groundwater is sustainable. This water is free and unlimited to farmers of avocados, kiwifruit, rhubarb etc.; residents with bores to augment their household water supplies and to water their gardens; and four commercial water carriers who supply water to residents in dry times, and transport water off the Mountain to breweries and soft-drink manufacturers. We

understand that at least one of these carriers also bottles and sells "spring water", and Beaudesert Shire Council has approved the bottling and sale of "spring water" at one site and the supply of groundwater to the water carriers from another site.

- 1.4 Will the practices referred to above have any long term adverse impacts on the environmental values of Tamborine National Park which includes Witches Falls National Park, the first National Park in Queensland? Long term residents remember Cedar Creek flowing throughout the year, but this now occurs only during the wet season, while the water carriers fill their tanks from bores drilled beside Cedar Creek. The platypus have survived this year in deep pools near Curtis Road.

2. Nothing is known about the extent of the groundwater resource, or the possible future impacts of the present practices referred to in 1. above on that groundwater resource. We understand that Council regularly tests water from all water carriers and,

"has not detected any significant health related problems with the quality of water supplied by private water carriers on the Mountain." (p. 3 Tamborine Mountain News 27.8.02).

However this water may come from deep bores, whilst there is anecdotal evidence that some shallow residential bores "smell of effluent" during dry times, and dry up after five minutes when at other times they are able to produce water for 45 minutes.

3. The Queensland Government takes the view that,  
"The Tamborine Mountain aquifer system is a relatively small upland aquifer that is recharged by direct infiltration" (letter from the Minister for Natural Resources to the Association dated 9.1.01)

and that there are a number of more critical areas that have a greater claim on its limited funds. The Beaudesert Shire Council has stated that,

"Council does not have the legislative means to prevent groundwater extraction." (p 153 Planning & Development Committee Report, 12.12.2000)

and is therefore unable to intervene,

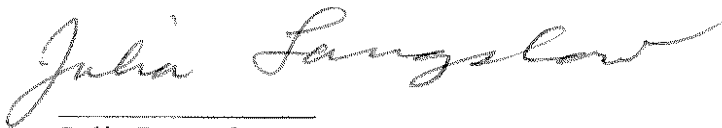
"...despite the questionable environmental sustainability of the practice".  
(p 72 Planning & Development Committee Report, 20&21.11.2000)

4. Whilst the paper presented to the Recycled Water Seminar in Newcastle on 19-20 May 1994, organised by AWWA and the Recycled Water Coordination Committee NSW, concerned the impact on groundwater of the disposal of effluent on land, the authors, J. Anderson and L. Lytton of the Department of Water Resources NSW, made the following general remarks,

"The invisibility of groundwater, together with the expense of installing groundwater monitoring networks, mean that there is often a paucity of data about the impacts of surface activities. Monitoring programmes often only commence after a problem has manifested itself. Ignoring groundwater monitoring is generally false economy as the potential problems are easy to manage at disposal but costly, long term and often intractable once problems are transferred to the groundwater system."

With a rapidly increasing residential population (which we understand is now over 6000) and expanding numbers of visitors in such a small and environmentally sensitive area, we believe that the potential adverse impacts on Tamborine Mountain's environment are considerable.

Conclusion - It may not be regarded by water managers as a major aquifer but Tamborine Mountain's aquifer nonetheless plays a vital role in our community by providing water for horticulture, and a backup residential water supply. It is for these reasons that many members of our community believe that our aquifer is important, requires investigation to determine the extent of the resource and whether the present practices have the potential to deplete and/or degrade that resource, and whether plans, measures or strategies need to be put in place to protect Tamborine Mountain's groundwater resource for the future.



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Julia Langslow

Secretary

11 October 2002