

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

FACSIMILE: 6277 4422

Dear Sir

Re: Submission to the Catchment Management Inquiry

Bombala Council wishes the standing committee to consider the following points in it's inquiry into Catchment Management. The points address each of the matters advertised in turn.

- It is unfortunate that Catchment Management has developed it's own structure rather than be placed under an existing structure. Reasons for this are unclear but the end result has seen the community view of the organisation as elitist and far removed from the majority of the community. This view has been reinforced by NHT funding decisions where there is almost no local control of the selection process. Local control is required and will bring the transparency needed to reestablish broad community support. Statistics on participation in Landcare groups strongly indicate only those groups receiving ongoing funding have stable membership.
- Whilst physical parameters support the catchment approach to environmental management other parameters need to be considered. Social and community inputs into environmental management have the largest potential for environmental gains. Awareness and community education will come through existing community structures which are not necessarily based on catchment boundaries. Indeed many are based on LG boundaries which further enhances the argument for LG control.
- More emphasis is required on ground works rather than never ending planning and strategy development. The community view is that planning is used when funding is not available and achieves little. Development of strategies mean little if no funding is available to carry them out. Again a LG based approach to Catchment management could start implementation of developed strategies and actually achieve environmental outcomes. Best practice is only achieved through a comprehensive and integrated approach.

- The objectives of Catchment management are best delivered through existing Local Government (LG) structures. This will provide more efficient use of existing administration facilities and the control of expenditure of significant amounts of public moneys through an accountable Government organisation. Other advantages include: development of close ties between the broader community and the issues rather than only the effected Landcare groups, integrated approach to development control and regulation, provision of (through the LG elected members) mechanisms for input from the community. The existing environmental services areas of LG could integrate with Catchment management for a comprehensive environmental management outlook. Private sector participation may also increase as negativities associated with State and Federal politics would be removed.
- Coordination of all aspects of catchment management must come from LG in order to achieve an integrated approach to the issues. Existing LG roles in land use planning and environmental services need simply to be expanded to cover catchment management.
- Monitoring and reporting functions already exist under LG structure and it is proposed similar systems would be utilised.

General comments on the matter follow:

- Devolution of water use management responsibilities (including licensing) to LG under a State directed framework will enhance local ownership of the resource and provide funds to restore degradation rather than fund a large bureaucracy plagued by State political problems. The existing LG rating systems could easily be adapted to suit.

Yours faithfully

N J MACHAN
GENERAL MANAGER