

**MOLONG CREEK & TRIBUTARIES MANAGEMENT
& PROTECTION ASSOCIATION INC**

[REDACTED]
Orange NSW 2800
13 April 2022

Professor Hugh Durrant-Whyte
Chairman
Review Panel
Natural Resources Commission
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Professor Durrant-Whyte

Re: Macquarie Bogan Unregulated Rivers Water Sources Review

This Association, established in 1982, represents over 100 riparian landholders in the Molong Creek and tributaries catchment. Molong Creek is a small water source, rising on Mt Canobolas and joining the Bell River North of Molong. The catchment is under constant pressure due to the increasingly peri urban nature of the upper reaches and rural subdivision generally. Projected increase in local population together with climate change will exacerbate this already stressed water resource.

There are 30 irrigation licences on the creek and three storages, Lake Canobolas, Borenore Creek Dam and Molong Creek Dam. The latter is the source of town water supply for Molong, Cumnock and Yeoval.

It is noted that it would be helpful if our submission addressed the contribution, or otherwise, the plan has made to environmental, social and economic outcomes. Also, an assessment is sought as to whether the plan has met its objectives.

This association does not have the resources to assess social and economic outcomes except in drought years when the effects are obvious to all. Environmental outcomes may be assessed by observation, members' reports and local knowledge. For example:

- Improvements in Creek water quality and quantity have been achieved not by River Flow Objectives so much but by riverine regeneration and rehabilitation in parts of the Molong Creek system. From Molong to the confluence of Molong Creek and the Bell River Cabonne Shire Council's willow removal and replanting with native tree species has improved water flows and water quality. Similarly, two landcare groups in the upper reaches have carried out willow removal work and revegetation, achieving significant improvements in water quality and quantity. For example, an area of Molong Creek known to the undersigned, usually dry in the summer, ran continuously until nearly the end of the dry years 2016-early 2020.

- We acknowledge that River Flow Objectives are the very basis of successfully managing a water source for optimum environmental outcomes but question whether local government entities' storage and access licence conditions are monitored for compliance. Are water releases made according to licence conditions and are local government entities made aware of their obligations to meet River Flow Objectives?

This Water Sharing Plan is limited in its success by how difficult it is to make contact with, and be advised by, staff members of Water NSW, the Department of Planning and Environment and other water management authorities. For example, in this catchment 17 of the 30 licences have conditions which are unenforceable due to missing or non-functioning measuring reference points¹. Letters, one two years ago and another recently, explaining the problem have not received a response. On another occasion unlicensed irrigation took six years to be resolved despite annual requests by this Association for action. We do however welcome increased attention to compliance by the Natural Resources Access Regulator but major upgrades to water measuring devices are required for compliance work to be effective.

Communication and co-ordination between various Government departments charged with water management and regulation appears to be poor. We acknowledge that this is a small catchment, in the wider water scene, but if riparian landholders in this catchment have difficulties communicating with the necessary authorities we suspect that we are not alone.

We hope this submission is helpful.

Yours sincerely



¹ Draft Water Sharing Plan Macquarie Bogan Unregulated and alluvial Water Sources, NSW Government Office of Water, September, 2011 pp. 135-140.

