

Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee

From: MRCCC Administration
Sent: Friday, 18 December 2015 3:52 PM
To: Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee
Subject: Submission in relation to the Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2015

18 December 2015

Research Director
Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Sir/Madam

Re Submission to the Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2015

For over twenty years, the Mary River Catchment Coordination Association (MRCCC) has actively encouraged and been involved in the adoption of improved land management practices and science based water resource planning for the catchment. We represent a wide range of different sectors from throughout the community and have a long history of drawing upon this breadth of perspectives in our contribution to the reform of water planning in Queensland. We wish to provide comment regarding the proposed amendments outlined in the Water Legislation and Amendment Bill 2015.

In the first instance, we wish to commend the Government for reinstating the principles of ecologically sustainable development and the purpose of sustainability management in the Act.

We offer the following suggested changes to the Bill:

1. Revoke Statutory right to take or interfere with underground water for mining operations and for the petroleum and gas industry

Allowing Part 4 of the Act to remain in place so that mining operations acquire a statutory right to take or interfere with underground water is a significant concern. The current possession of this right by Petroleum and Gas Operations puts at risk the water rights of all other landholders and also threatens the long term viability of groundwater dependent ecosystems. To extend this right to mining operations greatly increases this risk and increases the inequity with which different water users are treated. In the interests of equity across the community, there should be no one group that has a statutory right to take water (with the exception of emergency situations as already set out in the act). The potential magnitude of interference with the groundwater and modification of groundwater flows and subsurface geology associated with mining, particularly open cut, further increases the risk that these operations represent relative to agricultural operations.

We therefore request that Part 4 be revoked and the statutory right to take of the petroleum and gas industry also be revoked.

2. Review the role of Riparian Protection Permits

In our extensive dealings with Landholders we have noticed that since the exemptions for Riparian Protection Permits were introduced there have been a range of perverse outcomes associated with this change. In the past, having a representative review the proposed works provided an invaluable opportunity for the landholder to learn about the potential implications of the proposed work and to also learn how to do it more effectively. The current self-assessment approach is very readily misinterpreted and misapplied. We are aware of numerous cases of works being undertaken that have unforeseen consequences for the health of the watercourse and also caused conflict between neighbours both up and downstream of where the works have been completed.

We note that in the proposed amendments the provisions which allow for the declaration of a designated watercourse will be removed. We commend this move and also suggest that the exemptions for Riparian Protection

permits also be reviewed to ensure consistency with the principle of ecologically sustainable development and the purpose of sustainable management.

If you have any further clarification of the points raised above please contact this office at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,



Ian Mackay
Chair
MRCCC

Mary River Catchment Coordination Association Inc
PO Box 1027, Gympie, 4570

Resource Centre – 25 Stewart Terrace, Gympie

P: 07 5482 4766

M: 0408 170 102

E: admin@mrccc.org.au

www.mrccc.org.au