

Contact: Grant Moller

Reference: GRM

04 November 2013

Dam Safety Review  
NSW Trade and Investment  
GPO Box 5477  
SYDNEY, NSW 2001

Dear sir/madam

**Subject: Review of Dams Safety Act and Dams Safety Committee 2013**

Thank you for providing Goulburn Mulwaree Council with the opportunity to provide a submission to the 'Review of the Dams Safety Act 1978 and the Dams Safety Committee'. Council is the owner and operator of Pejar Dam, Sooley Dam and Rossi Weir. In addition we are also the owner and operator of the Highlands Source Pipeline (HSP) which provides raw water to Goulburn from the Wingecarribee Reservoir at Moss Vale.

Council maintains the above assets under the regulatory framework through the Local Government Act, NSW Best Practice Management of Water Supply and Sewerage, Dams Safety Act 1978 and many others state and national guidelines and standards.

The current review of the Act and Committee requires a broad sweep of the existing regulatory framework, existing catchment responsibilities and the current fragmented approach to whole of catchment management and how that can be enhanced to improve dam safety and catchment water quality. From a Council perspective as a Dam owner situated in the Sydney Catchment, the NSW dam's safety review needs to take into account issues such as the following:

- The current approach taken to dam safety and in our case specifically the Sydney Catchment Management process appears fragmented in nature and inadequate with respect to 'whole of catchment' issues. Council, SCA, CMA (Local Land Services), NSW Office of Water and local property owners all have responsibilities and rights within the catchment. There appears to be no whole of catchment management process at present as each department/authority is responsible for various aspects of the catchment.
- Council's Water Utility (Water Fund) owns the dam walls, some surrounding land, has some water access rights and environmental flow requirements. Council also owns the HSP with water access rights administered by SCA. All this wholly within the SCA boundaries. The Council General Fund has stormwater, vegetation and river environmental zone responsibilities.
- NSW Office of Water has legislative and regulatory rights including administering water access.
- SCA is a dam owner, bulk water supplier and also manages and protects Sydney's drinking water catchment and catchment infrastructure.

- Local Land Services (LLS) are now the Catchment Management Authority and will be responsible for the local Catchment Action Plans (CAPS). They are seen as the single point of contact for Catchment Management.

The issues above relate to whole of catchment management – not just dams safety. Water quality, catchment protection, dam safety, environmental releases are all closely linked and should be analysed as part of this review. Taking into account the above issues, there are many questions that need to be asked such as:

- What drivers are there in the existing regulatory framework for Council to provide resources and money towards dam safety, catchment management around our dams and water quality within our dams (particularly when we don't actually own the water) with SCA and LLS doing the same and/or similar?
- What is the relationship between Council, LLS and SCA and means of communication and responsibility with respect to dam safety and water quality in the catchment? Particularly when we have a flood event or release from our dams water that may be high in blue green algae or other water quality parameters of concern for the SCA, LLS and downstream users?
- Why is there not just one Catchment Management Authority responsible for the entire Sydney Catchment – including all dams, weirs, distribution pipelines, pump stations, riparian zones, environmental flows, yields, bulk water supply and water quality?
- Who is the appropriate authority to manage the existing Council, State and other Authority owned dams across the Sydney Catchment area?
- Is the current fragmented approach to dam ownership and catchment management the best method to manage dam safety, the catchment and its water quality and what risks are being amplified by this approach?

Council does not necessarily have a preferred position on or answers to the questions above but would like to participate on any future discussions. As a Water Utility operating under the Local Government Act and meeting NSW Best Practice Guidelines based on the National Water Initiative, we have certain requirements which include promoting sustainable water conservation practices and water demand management throughout our LGA. For this Council that includes a large catchment area (of which a significant portion including Pejar Dam and HSP are outside our LGA) large dam infrastructure and limited resources.

The current review of the Act and Committee requires a broad sweep of the existing regulatory framework, dam and infrastructure ownership, existing catchment responsibilities and the current fragmented approach to whole of catchment management and how that can be enhanced to improve dams safety and catchment water quality. It is also imperative that the safety of dams and the reducing of dam safety risks do not lead to excessively high dam costs and subsequent high customer water charges.

Thank you again for the opportunity to make this submission. For any additional information please contact the undersigned.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Grant Moller".

Grant Moller

**Manager Water Services**