

Lachlan Regional Water Strategy Consultation Submission

From Peta Emes

Condobolin Resident

These are the Actions that I would like to see prioritised for the next 3 to 5 years.

They will set the groundwork and directions for the further Actions over the Medium Term and then the Longer Term. My priorities are within Priorities 1,2 & 3.

As others will have differing priorities it would not be useful for me to rank and stage further the Medium and Longer Term Actions.

My main concerns and priorities are the preparedness for droughts which are more frequent than major floods. Minor floods are a normal feature of the Lachlan Valley.

This Consultation is poorly timed for farmers. I notice it is consistent with Gold Mining Applications exhibitions, where the miners prefer to minimise critical submissions from farmers.

When is the wheat harvest ? Now What is the major crop in the Lachlan Valley ( LV ) ? Wheat What happens during the wheat harvest ? Farming families, their helpers and contractors work 24 hours with minimal sleep to get the crops harvested and in the silos before the weather changes. The start of the northern Wet Season is too late as it brings storms to this area which damage the wheat. All other affairs including Submissions are put on the backburner for after the harvest. If the rate of Submissions from farmers is low those that are put in in time should be given greater weight in considerations.

Actions 1.1, 1.9, Options 30 & 33 Liveability

Liveability is a nice term.

It needs to be defined more precisely in terms of the Lachlan Valley, as it means many differing things to different people.

Main street shop keepers, who often have the ear of Councils will request more visitors attractions, to increase their turnover.

That is not the everyday liveability of towns people and farming families.

In fact the crime rate usually increases around holidays when many former residents return, being a burden for current residents.

The extreme shifts of mining workers interfere with the liveability of neighbours, giving continually interrupted sleep and reducing outdoor evening activities. Their shifts don't allow them to engage in local community activities and water sports. Less than 50% of mining employees are locals. They are international and distant Australian mining professionals, backpackers and other contract sourced employees, who want quick money for long hours in dirty and hazardous conditions.

Their regard for the local environment is largely "collateral damage", regardless of the public spin of mining executives.

Town 'green and blue grids' should not be created by reducing water demand from individual homes through water restrictions, that prevent homes having their individual perennial green spaces, lawns excepted.

I would like to point to the importance of perennial plants and trees beyond the Aboriginal and Orchard contexts.

Green and blue grids should not be seen as a substitute for home perennial gardens and trees.

Public spaces are used occasionally, if and when people can fit them into their routines, and by visitors, while home gardens are a daily presence providing pleasure and optimism, cooling and shade, clean air and space for outdoor daily activities in this hot summer climate.

Trees and perennials bring birds and small animals to where people live, developing an ongoing regard for and understanding of the environment and its cycles including weather.

Trees are important on farms and about homesteads and buildings as stock shelter, wind breaks and cooling.

To maintain perennial plants and trees in towns, about homesteads and on farms takes regular water. They can't just miss a year's water in droughts. They die, and their replacements will also die.

Ask people in Condobolin, Forbes and Parkes if they would like to live in Cobar or Broken Hill without these perennials and the answer would usually be no. They would rather move to the coast and have the higher rainfall and the possibility of future desalinated water.

Water restrictions are a way to depopulate the area. Water demand reduction by regulations is not an effective path for Priority 3. The methods used to handle the millennium drought are too rough for continuing use.

People live in the country so they can have plants, trees and animals, fresh air and space. Plants, trees and animals require regular water. Annual plants and lawns can be a luxury in good years of good rainfall.

### Actions 2.1, 2.3 New Dams

As the raising of Wyangala Dam wall has been cancelled the alternative of several well placed smaller dams should be considered, with the aims of moderating flooding and reducing erosion.

Logically one above Eugowra along the path that the recent “ wall of water “ flood took. Mandagery Creek or somewhere a new water pathway is developing ?

Some in the Upper Catchment, Boorowa River and other tributaries with valleys should be considered. As there are some small dams existing there, would it be useful to upgrade any ?

Reducing and having more control over flood peaks would have major benefits by reducing the damage of flood peaks to farms, housing, towns and infrastructure.

Several smaller dams would also increase the reliability of water in their areas.

I would prefer small dams to weirs as the water may be control released from dams according to the varying weather and climate, rather than the overflow spillway of weirs.

It is long term observable that rain falls most in areas with mountains, so dams below these areas are likely to be most effective long term. ( And near oceans, but we don't have those. Do the large lakes have any effects on rainfall ? )

### Action 1.8.1 and Options 21,22 & 23 Developing the Understanding of Groundwater Resources and their Capacity for use in the Long Term and During Droughts

Investigate and model groundwater.

My interest is the Upper Lachlan Alluvial Groundwater.

Israel has been using groundwater in a dry climate for decades and the long term effects are becoming obvious there. It would be worthwhile looking at and learning from their experience.

In mining large volumes of water are used for processing.

After use in processing the water is evaporated off in Tailings dams. That means that none of the water used seeps down to the groundwater to recharge, for safety reasons. All of the water used is lost to the LV concise system.

In contrast, farming, towns and other industries return a portion of the water they use to the river system and groundwater. They are better suited to a sustainable LV than mining.

### Actions 1.3, 3.5 & Option 32 Upgrade Hydrological Models with a view to easing Droughts through Water Management

Several new or upgraded smaller dams would also aid in this.

### Priority 3 The Easing of Droughts by use of a cohesive view and actions in the Lachlan Valley

#### Action 3.2 Investigate Water Use

Investigate the water needs for maintenance of perennial trees and plants of all usual species, not just the indigenous ones.

### Actions 1.9, 3.1, 3.2, Option 40 Comparative Industries

The suitability and staging of particular industries in the Lachlan Valley due to their volume of water use.

In this strategy there is consideration of farming but there is an omission of mining in detailing their water use.

It is not sufficient to say that mines are State Significant and thus above consideration and regulation in the Lachlan Valley Water Strategy. If they are water users they affect everyone else.

There is much talk of mining for critical minerals in the Lachlan Valley and valleys to the north that are supplied with water from the Lachlan.

The very large volumes of water needed consistently 24/ 7/ 360 for processing are not usually mentioned. I wonder if they are seriously considered, and if the effects on others are given serious weight and prioritised. The troubles surrounding the Cadia and Blayney gold mines suggest that their effects on others, and the prioritising of the needs of others, are not likely to be adequately addressed by governments.

Figure 11 page 38 appears to show that the Lake Cowal gold mine is a greedy user of ground water, with the orange and red showing in their bore locations, at a groundwater drawdown level of just below and above 40%.

We would not like to see an old style ' gold rush ' scenario of many mines over using scarce water resources to the detriment of farming and towns and other industries. The progressive staging of new mines would be one way of reducing their water impact on the system and other users.

There needs to be a qualitative view of the needs and value of the various industries.

Money is not the measure of all things. Money is a useful tool but a harmful master.

Lachlan Valley farming provides for the food needs of NSW primarily. Exports are a bonus.

Without LV beef the price in shops would triple, making it a luxury to be exported, and beyond the regular use of NSW people generally, leading to health problems such as low iron in the diet and the blood.

Without LV lamb and wheat the price for those would double creating economic woes for NSW households.

By contrast Mining is a luxury industry with goods that could be produced in many other places. It is attractive to governments for the export dollars, but basic foods are far more important. The lack of them can lead to changes of governments.

Farming adapts to the variable climate and the water available. Farmers make an art form and conversations of weather watching.

Mining requires consistently high volumes of water for processing and employs less than 50% local people.

Making the facts about water reliability in the LV easily available to potential miners and their backers is likely to cause them to readjust their bonanza optimism. And the Australian Government's.

### Further Comments

Option 35 : Increasing the proportion of High Security Licences would mainly benefit mines in practice, as they are the ones who can pay for them. The increase would be at the expense of General Security Licences, mainly farming.

The river and groundwater are already stressed during droughts so the expansion of irrigation systems should be discouraged. An exception may be connecting to homesteads for domestic, animals and stock water, however water carting from a closer take off point would probably be more efficient.

### My Comments on the Maps and Diagrams

More consistency in the colours and labelling of maps and diagrams would make the Strategy more readable.

The major dams Wyangala and Carcoar should be labelled.

The Mineral Hill mine between Condobolin and Cobar is not shown.

The maps are quite confusing and disconcerting without further explanation.

There is no shown Lachlan River connection between Condobolin and Forbes in some maps.

A new river or creek miraculously appears south of Condobolin in some maps.

The Lachlan River, Goobang Creek and that southern something are thickened beyond their natural width. The full length of the river has flooding either side, maybe the map is showing shallow groundwater.

I assume there are technical explanations not available to the general reader.

Please do give my priorities, comments, points and suggestions consideration now and in the future.

Peta Emes

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