

Council happenings . . .

with Mayor
Glenn Wall

Tillegra Dam Environmental Assessment Report

Last week council received the Tillegra Dam Environmental Assessment Report (EAR) to conduct our adequacy review.

Our submission to the NSW Department of Planning is required to be in Sydney by Friday.

As such, it can be predicted that the EAR will be available for public exhibition during September. As I have advised in the past, Hunter Water has indicated they will request the Department of Planning to extend the exhibition period for a minimum of 60 days.

The documents are extremely large and considerable time will be needed to fully evaluate the EAR during the exhibition period.

This project has considerable ramifications for council and our community at large. As stated previously, the project whilst in its infancy, had issues such as accessibility for properties beyond the dam that are now resolved.

However, matters such as preservation of the environment, heritage considerations, economic implications, community and social impacts still need to be scrutinised and appraised.

Other matters such as justification of the dam, geotechnical and geological findings and the impacts on existing infrastructure need to be assessed as part of the process.

From the council perspective, I am very satisfied that we have exhausted every avenue to ensure we are prepared to deal with the dam proposal.

However, as a community, we all have a role to play. One of the most critical aspects within the EAR is the Statement of Commitments.

This indicates exactly what Hunter Water will undertake to do on behalf of the community. I am under no illusion that Hunter Water as the proponent, will carry out all the matters of consideration that we have identified.

Extensive road works will be required and whilst this has been the subject of a Roads Access Study, the scope of works required will need commitment from all levels of government.

Regardless of whether you believe the dam should or should not be constructed, collectively, as a community if we do not "speak out" to the State and Federal Government that we need support with regards to additional road funding (particularly Raymond Terrace to Dungog), upgrades to National Parks and State Forests and supporting infrastructure, we will end up with very little.

We've already got poor supporting infrastructure in relation to the two existing dams in the Shire and on this occasion it is incumbent on us all to forward submissions to the NSW Government outlining exactly what "our" expectations are and what "our" concerns are.

We are only going to get one opportunity and indeed if the dam is approved, at that point in time if all these matters are not resolved, we've missed the boat.

The NSW Department of Planning will conduct the public consultation process, which will be advertised in local newspapers with the environmental assessment report placed on public exhibition.

This very sizeable document will be available for perusal on the internet, and various local venues such as Dungog Council chambers, Dungog Library, and Munn House.

Hunter Water advises that they will provide electronic copies of the document on compact disk upon request.

5 August 2009