

4 August, 1999

Mr Ian Dundas  
Secretary  
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Dundas,

### **Submission to the Inquiry into Catchment Management**

The Coxs River Catchment (management) Committee prides itself in its achievements and has made submissions to State Government about its capacity to be used as a model catchment management committee.

For this reason we make this submission addressing one aspect of your Inquiry and that is “the role of different levels of government, the private sector and the community in the management of catchment areas”. We particularly want to emphasise the importance of the interaction of government and community in the role of catchment management committees.

In the seven years of its operations the Committee has achieved a great deal, due in no small part to this interaction. Some of our notable achievements are as follows:

- Annual planning workshop
- Strategic plan developed
- Education kit for schools winning gold award in the Rivercare 2000 Awards
- A teacher visiting all catchment schools promoting the Education kit
- Initiated NHT funding for Lithgow and Oberon Landcare Association Coordinator
- Organised meetings between the community, Delta and DLWC to facilitate agreement on increased flow into the Coxs River from Lake Lyell
- Initiated funding for rehabilitation of Lake Pillans wetlands and State Mine Gully involving investments of over \$1 million in the catchment.
- Post 1997 bushfire meeting with stakeholders to start a recovery plan
- Blue green algae crisis meeting with stakeholders
- Survey to assess community knowledge and commitment to the environment
- Weeds information days
- Willow study
- Vegetation study
- Industry catchment forum
- Catchment landholders forum

There is no doubt in our minds that there are two key values in catchment management committees and they are close involvement of the catchment community and interaction between government and community. The following is a list of all of the factors which makes this Committee work well:

- **Close to its community** - the Coxs River catchment is relatively small thus enabling the Committee to pick up relevant community issues and facilitate resolutions.
- **Planning** – with community input we have worked on priority issues and produced annual operations plans (enclosed).
- **Strategic approach to activities** – the Committee follows the Catchment Management Act in promoting, coordinating and facilitating catchment activities and does not carry out on-ground activities.
- **The right mix of skills and backgrounds in Committee membership** – we have dedicated and enthusiastic community and agency representatives who provide valuable and assistance.
- **Performance monitoring** – we have produced a set of benchmarks or performance measures based on the functions of Committees specified in the Catchment Management Act. They could apply to any catchment management committee (CMC) and I enclose a copy.

### **Future Plans**

The Committee recently prepared its second Operations Plan. It concentrates on three main areas ie facilitating community consultation, advocating for catchment health and encouraging positive action by all stakeholders.

In coming years the Committee will:

- Release its nutrient source research and its report on the state of the catchment to guide future planning by local government, DLWC, the Sydney Catchment Authority, industry and commerce.
- Continue to act as advocate and facilitator for the catchment community
- Continue forums designed to bring organisations and community together about issues related to catchment health.
- Work with the Section 22 Committee in preparing the REP for the Sydney drinking water catchment.
- Educate the community about the management of weeds.
- Work with Council to review progress of upgrading the Lithgow City Council's sewage treatment plants
- Encourage investment and research into the health of the catchment
- Educate the catchment community to take action by working through schools and groups such as Landcare.
- Analyse the pattern and degree of investment into the catchment.
- Carry out the functions of water and vegetation committees, as it is now. Even when and if these committees are established for the catchment, the Committee could then coordinate their work.

The Coxs River Catchment Committee has become an example of how catchment management committees can achieve many things which Government cannot. Close links with the community are a committee's hallmark and its achievements are the products of innovation, low budgets and no legislative power. Similar exercises by Government would cost much more than the \$150,000 per year (approximate total cost of running a catchment management committee).

We therefore submit that catchment management committees make valuable and productive contributions to managing catchments. They are close to the catchment community and thereby bring about catchment management at a grass roots level.

Yours sincerely

**Sue Graves**  
**Chairperson**