

**THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE ON CLYDE RIVER WATER MET IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART ON WEDNESDAY 11 AUGUST 2004.**

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**Mr TERRY BYARD**, SOUTHERN TASMANIAN LICENSED ANGLERS' ASSOCIATION, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** (Mr Hall) - Good morning, Mr Byard. We have your submission, thank you very much. Is there anything you would like to that?

**Mr BYARD** - Thank you, Mr Chairman. Certainly there are a couple of things I would like to say. I would like to thank the committee for giving us the opportunity to make the presentation here today.

You might ask what a bunch of anglers is doing involving itself in this sort of rather complex issue and it is probably a good question but I suppose the heart of the answer to that lies in the fact that in part this issue deals with an area which is very significant to anglers in as much that both lakes Sorell and Crescent and the Clyde over time have been a very popular angling destination and also we have seen in more recent years a very significant decline in both the lakes and the river. We have Lake Crescent which has been infested, unfortunately, by carp, with one issue of decline there in the lakes. We have also seen a major water quality decline in Lake Sorell since around about the late 1990s and 2000. We also have seen a decline in the Clyde River as a fishery, which I will comment on a bit later.

The association, because of its involvement and commitment to this sort of area, decided that we ought to be involved in the overall water management process which is articulated through the Government's new water management legislation and which calls for the development of water management plans right across the State in a whole range of systems and catchments. So seeing that this was on our patch, we thought we should be part of the overall management process for that. So in due course we were invited to participate in the consultative group which was developed to prepare those draft water management plans.

Just before I get into that, within that process - to come back to my first opening point about the value of those lakes as a fishery - we actually submitted information to the consultative group process because we felt it was important to establish just how important this area is as a recreational fishery. As I said earlier, Lake Sorell was perhaps the best brown trout fishery in Australia; Lake Crescent was very prominent because it was known as a prize trophy trout water.

So we asked ourselves three questions, and the first one was what was the value of angler expenditure for the Sorell-Crescent fishery prior to the discovery of European carp in Lake Crescent in 1995, and the major decline in the water quality in Sorell. Secondly, what was the value of real estate and other infrastructure which has been developed in

the Interlaken area as a result of those activities and interests in fresh-water angling. The third question was, what was the value of the fishery to the local commercial district and the Central Highlands Municipality overall, again prior to the closure of Lake Crescent and the decline of water quality in Lake Sorell.

Those studies revealed that in the five years prior to the discovery of carp in Lake Crescent, Lake Sorell averaged participation by 30 per cent of the State's anglers, and that was a sustainable sort of participation, fishing in Lake Sorell. So we are saying 30 per cent of all licensed anglers in the State fished Lake Sorell over that five-year period, and a decreasing number of around about 10 per cent of anglers fished Lake Crescent.

We provided a whole range of participation rates, and so on, and the bottom line there was that the value of those fisheries in 2002 dollars - that's when we prepared this submission - the value that anglers contributed in participating in that area as a fishery approximated to about \$16 million per annum. That figure stacks up pretty well when I think recently we had Mr Giason from Tourism Tasmania on national television saying that angling in Tasmania is now worth in the order of \$50 million. So a simple deduction of about 30 per cent participation back then, about 30 per cent of \$50 million in today's terms is about \$16 million, which is the figure that we came up with.

Also we looked at the value of real estate and other infrastructure in the area. That was what sort of things had anglers brought to the area in terms of holiday shacks and in terms of camping facilities and structures. There was significant camping infrastructure placed at Dago Point and at Silver Plains on Lake Sorell by Parks, and so on. Bearing in mind that we are only a volunteer community group so we don't have a lot of resources at our disposal but I would like to think that the information that we gained was a very meaningful and representative sort of effort which captured the approximate value. We came up with approximately \$3 706 000 worth of investment in that area in recent times that can be attributed to things like club shacks at Dago Point, camping facilities and amenities; the subdivision that was put in at Laycock Drive, and other work in the area that was directly linked to angling.

The third area, as I said, what was the value of the fishery to the commercial district, again we had a fair bit of difficulty with that one because obviously it required a lot of information to be gathered from a whole range of tourism-type sources and stuff like that, so it was very difficult.

But again on national television recently we saw the mayor and the deputy mayor as part of the *Landline* program come out and state quite publicly the huge decline in the commercial activities that occurred in 1995 when Lake Crescent was closed. At the recent opening of Lake Crescent we heard the mayor say that it was great to be in Bothwell last Saturday because there was a buzz in the town that had not been there for nine years, and I think that is an important point to make too.

We did provide to this process some indication of some activity that we were able to get with regards to the participation rate of accommodation in the highlands by interstate visitors and fishers, how many people visitors brought with them and so forth. That information was tabled to the water management planning process.

To come back then to our submission, as I said, the main aim of the association in participating in the water management process is to ensure that the proposed water management plans will provide the framework for delivering long term environmental and ecological sustainability of the lakes and the river and their associated values. That is the key to the whole thing.

As I said we have seen a major decline in that area as a fishery and the view that we have taken all along is that if we have a healthy ecosystem we have a healthy fishery, and those two are inextricably linked.

So we have been through this process of developing the water management plans. There are a couple of aspects that I would like to mention about that. Item 2 of our submission, to restate the fact that these draft water management plans are in fact underpinned by perhaps the most rigorous scientific assessment that has ever been undertaken in Tasmania of the lakes and river system and that there were a number of major projects associated with that work.

It is also worth noting, I did not put it in our submission, but those projects were under the control of a steering committee which included, in fact, the chairman of the Clyde trust and the water manager for the Clyde trust, so as well as having bureaucratic and scientific input there was also community involvement in that steering committee which oversaw that process.

I think it would be a fair claim to make that we have heard testimony from others over the last day and a half that the Clyde trust has had control of that system for a long time, in excess of 150 years. We would say that these studies would be the first time in that 150 years that any major work has been undertaken to assess the environmental impact on the system of water extraction from the system as a whole.

The other point I would like to make is that the composition of the consultative group that was formed to prepare the plans was very extensive and it did pick up all of those major stakeholders, we believe, who had interests in the catchment and as well anglers, irrigators, the Hydro and council et cetera were involved in that.

In terms of the quantum of water available, we heard the previous speaker say that the 10 000 megalitres is probably not enough. First of all if I could say that the 10 000 megalitres represented in the water management plans represents approximately the last 30 years of usage or releases from Lake Crescent. That is the average release each year over the last 30 years. That included the component for downstream at Hamilton, so we have now taken that out so theoretically that lifts that a little bit. We have heard talk that it includes the town water component, which it does, and water for riparian users along the system. It is also worth noting, however, that council records indicate that last year the Bothwell area, the township, used approximately 180 megalitres of that water as the town supply.

So 2 500 megalitres, we would say, is a fairly generous allocation to pick up that town and riparian use even allowing for significant water loss through the system as a result of evaporation. Also, the 10 000 does not include the amount of water that can also be taken from the river, which can be significant but can also be a much smaller amount depending on the nature of the season. One of the features of the Water Management

Plan is that under the old regime, once we are in the irrigation season water was not available to be taken as a temporary allocation. One of the features we believe of the water management plan now is that once the benchmarks have been established for environmental flows and those flows have been met then whatever is over those flows can be taken by users of the system at any point through the year. So it doesn't matter whether we are in irrigation season or out of season, once those bench flows or triggers have been met for environmental purposes then that extra water is available.

**CHAIR** - Just a quick question. You are part of that consultative or management group; when do you anticipate that a benchmark for environmental flow will be promulgated?

**Mr BYARD** - That will be incorporated within the context of the draft plans when they are released shortly. We had Mr Bowden say yesterday, and he quite correctly said, that the initial indications from DPIWE on that environmental flow component did seem high and that flow has now been adjusted back somewhat and that he generally supported that.

**CHAIR** - When?

**Mr BYARD** - We've one more meeting hopefully to basically sign off of the river plan. The lakes plan in effect is all but finished. The river plan is almost finished. So once that is done I believe that we move into the standard or the mandatory 60-day period whereby the plan goes to public exhibition. Within the first 30 days it goes for public comments and we go through this whole scrutiny process which has been articulated in the process for management of those plans.

The other thing that I would like to touch on concerning the river is that it is in relatively poor condition overall and at the moment it doesn't meet primary contact standards. I think that, personally, is an issue or a concern because when you think that river is the main source of consumptive water for a township. That it doesn't meet primary contacts standards is something to be concerned about.

We would also submit that the Clyde River as a trout fishery has gone through a major decline in recent years; that has been corroborated through scientific and other information provided to the water management planning process. We had Dr Peter Davies, who is probably one of the most eminent fresh water ecologist in the State and who has done fair amount of consulting work for this water management plan process, who clearly showed that there was a link in the crash of the fishery to the commencement of the taking of water for winter filling of the two major system, dams that have been built within the system. So what we are saying there is that as soon as the irrigation season finishes then there is a need to fill the off-stream storages or the farm storages. Dr Davies has clearly shown that there was a link between that water suddenly being taken out of the river during a critical period of the development stage. The eggs will sit in reds, which is simply a little pile of gravel within the river bed and that can be dewatered and those eggs will still survive. But what can't happen is that once the little fish migrates or comes out of the egg, although it is still attached to the egg sack, it has to have water and it cannot survive. So what Peter Davies work showed was that these reds were dewatered and that eventually has led to the decline or the crash of the river as a trout fishery. So that is another issue and I think another reason why we have to have a sensible environmental flow regime within the river. And providing that we do have an environmental flow regime, then there is some hope that the river will recover somewhat.

Although there have also been statements made that the Clyde River is a regulated system and so it is. It is perhaps the most regulated river in the State. But that by its very nature means that it is probably not in good order because a regulated river is not in good order. It's not doing what nature intended it to do; it is doing what man intended it to do. That is one of the dilemmas and one of the issues that we have to face and I believe that we need to manage this system in such a way that all the stakeholder groups can get some benefit out of it as the previous speaker has said.

But I think what has been shown through the scientific work is that the environmental damage that has occurred in the lakes, particularly Lake Sorell, by being taken to the level it was taken to in 2000, together with that sort of drought period that we were in et cetera, has had a very long lasting effect and we really cannot afford to take those lakes down to that sort of level again.

I believe that within the water management plan a sensible regime, which does compromise environmental values, there is no question about that and it does compromise probably some of the irrigators demands, there is, I believe, a very scientific water management regime there that would ensure the long-term sustainability of those lakes and ensure that their ecological and environmental values are protected. If we want those lakes to be a sustainable resource for us for whatever reason into the future then it is important that we have regard to these environmental needs.

That is perhaps all I want to say.

**CHAIR** - I have one question I would like to lead off with. You talked about the failure to meet primary contact standards. Are you saying that that is essentially caused by extraction of the irrigation water?

**Mr BYARD** - No, not at all. I think it represents a general state of health of the Clyde River and certainly the scientific work that was done as part of the water management process has shown that environmentally the river is not in a good state.

A lot of the problem with the Clyde is that we know Lake Crescent is a turbid lake and Lake Sorell was to a lesser degree. Inevitably a certain amount of that turbidity does get sucked out of the lake and into the river system. It is interesting to note that in the winter the river runs pretty clean when the lakes are shut off and as soon as the lakes are opened then we get this dirty water.

The turbidity level in Lake Crescent is nevertheless relative to water level. The higher the level in Lake Crescent the lower the turbidity. That is another reason for maintaining a sensible lake regime.

**CHAIR** - It was interesting, there was some documentation, the committee has, I think, historically going back to the 1840's. Back at that time some people died before the time of irrigation -

**Mr BYARD** - Absolutely, typhoid wasn't it?

**CHAIR** - yes, or even regulation of the river. The water qualities, even back in that time, got bad for a period of time.

**Mr BYARD** - We acknowledge that. But we also have to acknowledge, as a speaker yesterday claimed, that the Clyde trust owns the water in the lakes. Surely, we have to move on, this is 150 years later.

We have seen the emergence of recreational angling in the State developed to what it is. It is a huge industry; the world has changed since the 1850s and we have to manage today not back to then. If we can do things better today than what we did 150 years ago then we should be doing it.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Terry, when you were giving your evidence you mentioned the 2 500 megalitres that were to be taken out to ensure water supply to Hamilton and Bothwell. You did some figures -

**Mr BYARD** - We have information from council records which indicates that the actual water usage by the township of Bothwell last year was between 150 and 180 megalitres; that is the town waters component, if you like, of that 2 500.

The water management process was tossed around but on balance the group decided it was better to leave the town component within the overall allocation. The trust have done a good job over time in managing that town component and ensuring that the town did not go without water. It was probably a fair easier process to have that amount included in the overall allocation component as opposed to trying to take it out and manage it separately, because if you take it out you have to start working out what the true evaporative loss is and stuff like that.

All I am trying to say is that 180 out of 2 500 still leaves a fair chunk of water and even after taking out a reasonable amount for riparian and other uses down the stream there is still a fair bit there after taking into account evaporative losses. They are not 50 per cent.

**Mrs SMITH** - But the riparian rights extend to cattle et cetera and so forth.

**Mr BYARD** - Absolutely, stock, yes.

**Mrs SMITH** - So there would be a percentage for that.

**Mr BYARD** - We are not denying that at all. We are simply saying that there is a component, so let us not focus on that they've only got 10 000. That is true. The allocation has 10 000 and, of that 10 000, 2 500 is for the town. The rest of it is in surety 5, surety 6, depending on water levels and stuff like that. But there is some fat in the system, I would think, within that 2 500.

**Mr WILKINSON** - So you're saying the fat is 2 320 less evaporation, whatever that might be.

**Mr BYARD** - Less riparian needs. Now that might only be 200 or 300 megalitres or 500 megalitres or something, but it is still extra water that goes towards farming activities downstream. And I do not think the temporary water allocation provisions should be overlooked either, because at times there could be probably twice the annual allocations worth in the river, in some good years. It is a lot of water. I can tell you that

the Hobart City Council in 2000, for approximately 65 000 users, paid just over \$5 million for about 10 500 megalitres of water, and that included the CBD.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Is that right?

**Mr BYARD** - It just gives some idea of the volume of water we are talking about.

**Mrs SMITH** - You did a 30-year history in your management plan to get a -

**Mr BYARD** - Yes, for the water management plan.

**Mrs SMITH** - How did you deal with the one big flush - I think somebody gave evidence of 27 000 megalitres - with the carp issue? Did you equate that into your averages in that 30 years?

**Mr BYARD** - They were figures that were provided by DPIWE within the process, but now that you have raised the carp issue there has been a lot said over time about the volume of water that was released. Why it was released et cetera would be better perhaps addressed to Inland Fisheries, but could I just say that from our point of view that any noxious species or pest species unfortunately when they are discovered comes with a cost, a huge community cost. And if we did lose water as a result of carp et cetera then it was not just the cost to the irrigators. We have already heard of the effect on the loss of Lake Crescent to the commercial district of Bothwell. All those anglers with an interest in Lake Crescent have been denied use of that area for nine years, and some of those had just built their retirement homes prior to the loss of Crescent. It was a huge impost on them, because they have invested their life savings in something that they wanted to do, and the first 10 years of their retirement have just gone. So we should not say that the cost has just been to the irrigators.

Take foxes: how much money could have gone into health and other important social issues had we not had to put all this money towards trying to sort out this fox problem? Communities pay a huge price, regrettably, for these sorts of occurrences.

**Mr FLETCHER** - Mr Byard, you stated that recreational fishing was a huge industry. How huge?

**Mr BYARD** - I think I said in my statement that we had the head of Tourism Tasmania on national television only a week ago saying that recreational angling in Tasmania is worth approximately \$50 million to the State. That is a figure that the Government clearly acknowledges and accepts. It is huge.

**Mr FLETCHER** - The whole of tourism contributes 8 per cent to the gross State product -

**Mr BYARD** - Certainly, absolutely.

**Mr FLETCHER** - so you would be a minuscule part of the whole tourism -

**Mr BYARD** - Perhaps so, but we have 20 000-odd participants in fresh water angling. We are a pretty big group. We are probably one of the largest recreational groups in the State, with 20 000-odd licences.

**Mr FLETCHER** - And yet there is considerable publicity recently that it is an industry in decline.

**Mr BYARD** - There was that report, but there was also some information from, I think, Inland Fisheries which would suggest that that decline is now going back up the other way too as a result of measures that Inland Fisheries adopted to address that. But they would be questions better addressed to Inland Fisheries.

**Mrs SMITH** - Okay. Very well presented.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much for your evidence, Mr Byard, and members of your group.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**