

24 May 2000

Mr Terry Loos
Development Assessment and Coordination
Environmental Protection Agency
PO Box 155
BRISBANE QLD 4002.

Dear Mr Loos,

Re: Environmental Impact Assessment – Condamine Weir

The Condamine Catchment Management Association (CCMA) would like to make the following submission on the Final Draft Environmental Impact Study (EIS) on the Condamine Weir. Our primary concerns are outlined below.

Riparian Zone Management

The study identifies the importance of remnant vegetation communities located adjacent to, upstream and downstream of the study site. It is extremely important that the ecological function of this remnant vegetation is not compromised as there are only isolated patches remaining in the Condamine Catchment.

Remnant vegetation is extremely fragmented within the catchment, particularly in the vicinity of the proposed study site. It is highly likely that this feature plays a critical role in the provision of habitat and food for wildlife and aquatic organisms.

The potential impact resulting from some 40km of impoundment is also quite high. Stream bank stability and the functioning of riparian and aquatic ecosystems will be altered. The cumulative impact of this change on the entire river system requires further investigation.

The EIS also refers to the establishment of a fish ladder. It is imperative that the design of this fish ladder adequately meets the needs of native fish found in the Condamine River system and the effectiveness of the fish ladder should be monitored. The increase in proportion of stream bed permanently inundated may also be detrimental to native fish breeding.

Nature Conservation

Additional independent surveys should be undertaken to ensure that the 21 rare or threatened species that have been recorded in the past (within or near the study area) are protected. The CCMA would like to recommend the regular monitoring for these species and the development and implementation of recovery plans should these species be identified.

Water Quality

Identified water quality issues such as high turbidity, high phosphorus, increasing faecal coliforms, seasonally high concentrations of atrazine and endosulphan all require regular and event based monitoring to identify trends and potential impacts during rainfall events. The CCMA would like to request that the results of this monitoring be regularly presented to the Committee for their review.

The CCMA supports the establishment of minimum operating levels on the weir to secure entitlements for instream environments and to minimise impacts resulting from possible water quality events. This includes the provision of environmental releases and flush flows when required. Minimum operating levels would also need to be consistent with any requirements identified during the Water Allocation and Management Planning Process (WAMP) for the Condamine Balonne.

Monitoring of groundwater in the irrigation area, that is to be supplied by the storage, needs to occur to identify any future trends such as rising groundwater tables and any changes in groundwater quality. It is essential that the water disposal areas do not interconnect with groundwater aquifers and the resultant ponded area behind the weir to minimise the possible contamination of the groundwater resource.

Downstream Impacts

Construction of the weir will impact upon the geomorphology of the Condamine River both up and downstream. It is essential to ensure that the trapping of sediment does not result in bank undermining downstream or any other adverse impact. The CCMA supports the monitoring of sediment movement as recommended in the EIS.

In addition the operation of the weir should be consistent with the outcomes of the WAMP and result in no loss in base or low flow conditions. Stock and domestic and riparian rights should not be adversely affected. Consideration of flow levels downstream of the weir should also be reviewed in light of the WAMP process.

Associated Impacts

- The CCMA strongly encourages the establishment of Land and Water Management Plans to be developed and approved prior to allocating licences to lands benefiting from access to the storage resource. Specifically, further consideration must be made on whether the soil types are suitable for irrigation. This is to ensure that Best MPs are adopted to minimise potential salinity issues and runoff from farms/irrigation areas is controlled, and the potential contamination of the watercourse from runoff pollutants.
- The study site is subject to periodic and widespread flood events. The potential cumulative impact of the extent of flooding needs to be clarified, particularly due to the increased bed level caused by the impoundment and the additional volume of water.

Yours sincerely,

Catherine Potter
Coordinator – Condamine Catchment Management Association Inc.