



Attn: 2018 water price review
Essential Services Commission
Level 37, 2 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

To the Commissioner

RE: Submission into the GWM Water Price Submission

I write in reference to the GWM Water Price Submission, with specific relation to

At the February 2018 Council meeting, it was resolved to make a submission outlining that 'Council supports the continuation of the recreation water contribution charge, yet it opposes the planned increase of the cost of recreational water from \$20 per Megalitre to \$25 per Megalitre'. At the meeting, the following was noted:

For some time, Councillors and staff have been in discussions with the recreational lake committees within the Buloke Shire about the financial burden for the cost of filling lakes. Whilst most of these volunteer committees derive income from membership fees, boat launching fees and camping fees, quite often they still struggle to meet the annual cost to top up the lake. The Wooroonook Lake Foreshore Committee is one that has struggled recently; particularly given blue green algae outbreaks have reduced the camping, boating and membership income.

Council and the state government are investing heavily into infrastructure upgrades of these lakes, with amenity block upgrades at Wooroonook, Tchum and Watchem, upgrades to toilet and shelter at Donald Folletti Lake and the \$2 million project to return water to Green Lake. This capital investment, valued over \$3million, highlights the importance that Council places on recreational Lakes. The investment is backed by a strong business case that highlights the importance of recreational lakes to our region. In a recent study entitled 'Wimmera Southern-Mallee: Socio-Economic Value of Recreational Water', it was found that the recreational lakes within the Buloke Shire Council contribute \$1.045 million per annum to the local economy.

The State Government's *Water for Victoria Plan* also recognises the recreational value of water to communities and the role water plays in helping sustain resilient, strong and healthy communities. New water legislation champions the requirement for water managers to consider the benefit and values of recreational water to communities. As part of this recognition, we are requesting increased financial support from GWM Water for our recreational lakes.

In 2018-2023 GWM Water Price Submission, it identifies that '*the supply of water to recreation lakes was the most significant issue raised during the Water Plan 3 consultative period*'. It is therefore disappointing to see the planned price increase of

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recreational water by 20% over the coming five years (from \$20 per Megalitre to \$25 per Megalitre), especially given the recreation contribution charge paid by GWM Water rated customers is also increasing from \$16 to \$18. The justification for the recreation contribution charge increase is to include schools in the recreation water classification for watering ovals.

Given the clear evidence of economic benefit and community support, Council is keen on taking an advocacy lead in requesting recreation water usage fees are reduced and increased financial support is provided to the lake committees.

If you have any questions regarding this submission, please make contact with Mr Anthony Judd, Council's Director Works and Technical Services, on 1300520520.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read 'A Judd', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Anthony Judd
Director Works and Technical Services

Cc: Records