



## PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES

### Joint Select Committee on Protecting Local Water Utilities from Privatisation

#### Supplementary questions: Brewarrina Shire Council

1. Can you expand on the importance of having regional training centres and on-country training being available for indigenous staff?

Regional training centres for Indigenous communities and peoples on Country are a vital part of the solution.

Not only would they be a venue to train and engage locals to enable them to meaningfully contribute and share knowledge and then engage in employment, but they could and should potentially be a viable engagement and learning venue and opportunity On Country for all parties such a more urban people to come and learn On Country before making decisions that affect long term.

Regional Training Centres will boost local river communities in many ways and help to alleviate many issues that regional remote On Country communities are facing.

Some of the issues we are facing especially in combating water management are;

- The recruitment of local qualified staff. (not only do we have recruitment shortages but we also have a diminishing pool of trained staff who can pass their knowledge onto new staff. The staff with experience are leaving or retiring while others are being lured into other industries doing the same water operations. A Training Centre in our community would enable the training of local people as the next generation of knowledge and capacity on country)
- Young local people need their connection to family and country and this can often mean they will not engage in training away from home, they are clever, capable and good people who genuinely care for their community and would be an outstanding candidate but can not be away from home so miss the opportunity for further training, these young people are the future knowledge holders of their communities and the most important reason for local training centres On Country in local communities.
- Often people are trained in an urban environment, and this can impede the application of their learning as it is not relevant to the issues faced On Country.
- Taking people away from Country for training also takes vital money out of our already low socio economic communities, On Country training centres could and should have the potential to generate income to the local economy especially if urban people who are learning water management and utilities services are required to do a learning block On Country, they would contribute to the struggling local economies by ways of accommodation and food and fuel etc.
- There is not better classroom than the river bank, the river pump or the bores from the great artesian basin that feed local communities On Country to provide learning, qualifications and knowledge and to be places of observation, conservation and gathering information to enable efficient future water management than On Country.
- Many on Country Communities such as Brewarrina have extensive knowledge and the personnel to train staff not only in Drinking Water Management but also in other vital trades required for water management and delivery such as Plumbing and Electrical

2. Can you provide information on how high salinity source water is having negative flow-on effects for the community, such as impacts on the operation of dialysis machines?

As we are all aware costs of servicing equipment especially in remote areas are very high and when hospitals for example have issues with water quality affecting dialysis machines any servicing previously done becomes useless as the machines shut down and require more servicing, this puts more strain on the finances of our health system and potential for patients not to be treated in a timely manner.

3. At the hearing you mentioned that your Council is mindful of keeping water rates as low as possible and that service fees don't cover the full cost of providing utility services. Does your Council have a view about how those operational costs could be better met from other sources?

Council has contracts with RMS for road maintenance which already subsidises some of Utilities along with grants for any capital works.

4. You mentioned that river water quality has been decreasing over the last few decades. Can you provide more information on the key causes behind decreasing water quality?

The causes as we see it are that there is not a constant flow of water in our river system due to obviously sometimes we are in drought but also the amount of water taken from the river with minimal return (monetary) to communities along the rivers, with irrigators being the main contributors to water loss from river.

