

**Submission  
No 87**

## **INQUIRY INTO WATER AUGMENTATION**

**Organisation:** Spring Hill & Surrounding District Consultative Committee Inc.

**Date Received:** 2 September 2016

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## Spring Hill & Surrounding District Consultative Committee Inc.



16<sup>th</sup> August 2016

To the Committee,  
The Inquiry into Water Augmentation for rural and regional NSW,

As the Spring Hill and Surrounding District Consultative Committee (SH&SDCC) we write to respond to your inquiry to draw attention to water within the Canobolas area of the Central Tablelands within the Macquarie and Lachlan River Catchments and the Groundwater of the Orange Basalt Groundwater Aquifer.

The landform is the Canobolas Tertiary Volcanic Basalt Complex, consisting of highly fertile basalt soils classified in the State Environmental Planning Policy as Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land, this valuable unique area being similar to that of the New England, Monaro and Coolah Tops within New South Wales, these unique areas are not in abundance on our continent.

Within the Canobolas Basalt Complex is the Orange Basalt Fractured Rock High Quality Groundwater Aquifer, the water within this Aquifer being pure of the highest quality drinkable water, utilised by many for domestic, agricultural and Municipal use. Upon the tertiary basalt complex has formed the major water divide known as the Canobolas Divide, the North East waters flowing to the Macquarie River and the South West waters flowing to the Belubula and Lachlan Rivers. A major percentage of the water flow from this basalt zone, within the Macquarie Catchment, catches the Drinking Water for the City of Orange, with a population of approximately 43,000 people.

Within the Canobolas Volcanic Complex is a Basalt Plateau, which lies to the east of Mt Canobolas, containing the unique characteristics of a Basalt plateau, with a high elevation subalpine environment that experiences high rainfall, with a major water divide situated through the centre. These characteristics include networks of Montane headwater swamps and Basalt Plateau lagoons on either side of the catchment divide and an abundance of naturally occurring springs, evident by the locality names, many containing 'spring', the area has a high water table and the soils are classified as having high infiltration rates, the groundwater therefore is highly vulnerable. The Plateau and the Canobolas Volcanic Complex is a very important Hydrological area, the upland wetlands of Montane Swamps and Plateau Lagoons play an invaluable role in providing groundwater recharge and filtration to the Orange Basalt Aquifer, as well as filtering surface water flows.

In addition, this environment supports subalpine vegetation of Tablelands Snow Gum Community and Basalt Forest Community all recognised within the *NSW threatened Species Conservation Act*. These communities and associated fauna habitat are highly threatened due to the extent of clearing that occurred in earlier settlement to utilise the highly productive basalt soils of the area.

Until very recently Orange City Council (OCC) had implemented strict development rules to protect this area, with a tightening of lot sizes in the 1990s to exclude small subdivision and the 2011 Orange Local Environment Plan minimum lot size for the area being 100 hectares and the Orange Drinking Water Catchment area appropriately zoned Environment Management(E3).

As of April 2015, in total disregard for its own LEP, Orange City Council lodged a rezoning proposal with the NSW LEP Gateway to rezone 318hectares at Spring Hill & Huntley near the Spring Hill Airport for the development of a very large Industrial Estate. Prior to this proposal in 2013-14 Orange City Council rezoned a large area at this location to SP2 infrastructure (from E3) to 'facilitate the extension of the aerodrome runway and road realignment' during the upgrade of the Airport, which was completed in 2015. It is noted that a significant surplus of this infrastructure

rezoned land was not utilised for the extension of the airport and is now subject to the (2015) current Industrial/industrial-business (IN 1 & Ind/Bus{B7}) rezoning proposal. The site is located right on the catchment divide. This location provides huge volumes of surface water runoff into the Orange Drinking Water Storage of Suma Park and Spring Creek Reservoirs. This proposal is not identified within the endorsed sub-regional rural and Industrial land use strategy and is not supported by adjoining councils within the subregion.

The SH&SDCC formed to oppose the location of Orange City Council's afore mention proposal, our concerns surround the threat industrial activities pose to the groundwater and surface water, endangered remnant native biodiversity and the fragmentation of Australia's highly productive Agricultural land, as well as being a negative economical proposal with no supporting infrastructure present at the location. Our Committee continues to lobby against this proposal. Currently the proposal is allegedly said to be an area of 200 hectares proposed for rezoning. Orange City Council have proceeded to purchase hundreds of hectares of prime agricultural land at the location. Considering the significant importance of the location, Orange City Councils credibility is very much in question.

As your panel would probably be aware recently OCC are progressing with a pipeline to transfer potable water, this pipeline is to connect Orange, Blayney, Carcoar and Lake Rowlands. Within OCC's review of Environmental Factors for this pipeline the review states that OCC has surplus water from the Macquarie River Pipeline (Orange Drought relief Project) to allow for treated water to be transferred via this pipeline, to the Lachlan Catchment area and the Central Tablelands Water users.

Also stated in this pipeline review is Orange City Council intention to conduct Artificial Aquifer Recharge into the Orange Basalt Groundwater Aquifer, at a location transversed by this pipeline using water provided by this pipeline. The location is understood to be in the vicinity of Huntley & Spring Hill, at the headwaters of the Catchments were the deepest areas of the Groundwater Aquifer are located. Our committee would like to emphasise the importance of a thorough assessment of the impacts of artificial recharge into an aquifer containing the highest quality water available on our continent. Our committee encourages agencies to utilise Aquifer/s of a lower water quality if pursuing this practice, as the water used needs to be guaranteed to be of a higher quality than what is contained within the Aquifer, which is impossible to achieve in a high quality aquifer situation.

In the past, in order to utilise the very productive organic soils within the wetlands upon the basalt plateau, drainage was put in by farmers, this drainage is easily reversible and should be encouraged where appropriate, to facilitate rehabilitation of these wetlands in conjunction with agriculture, thereby restoring this natural water retention and recharge of the groundwater.

Our committee also draws your panels attention to another situation which threatens the quality of ground and surface water at this location and the wider area. This is the OCC permitted activities of a self regulating Liquid Waste Business which is operating at Spring Terrace at the headwaters of the catchment, which is receiving and processing liquid waste and applying liquid waste to the land by way of injection, in a highly groundwater vulnerable zone (Orange Basalt Aquifer) where huge volumes of surface water flow into the Orange Drinking Water Storage Reservoirs. These activities which deal with all types of liquid waste were approved at the Gander Road, Spring Terrace location in 2009 by OCC.

SH&SDCC appreciates the opportunity to make this submission to your panel and emphasis's the importance of the protection of the quality of one of our most precious resources WATER.

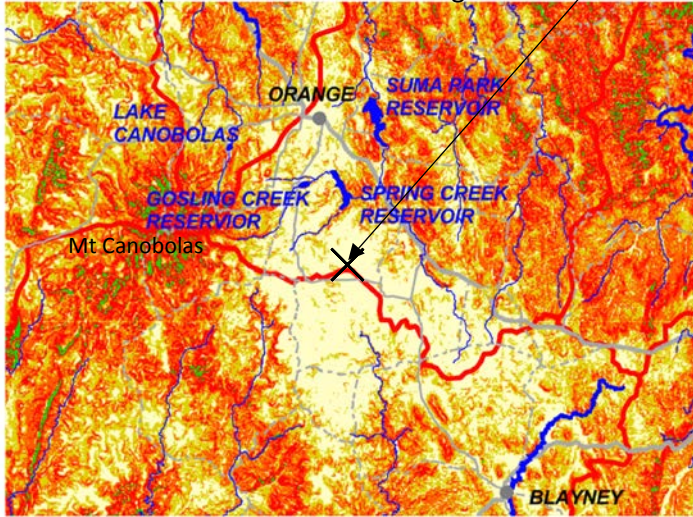
Yours faithfully

Susannah Playfair  
Chairperson  
SH&SDCC

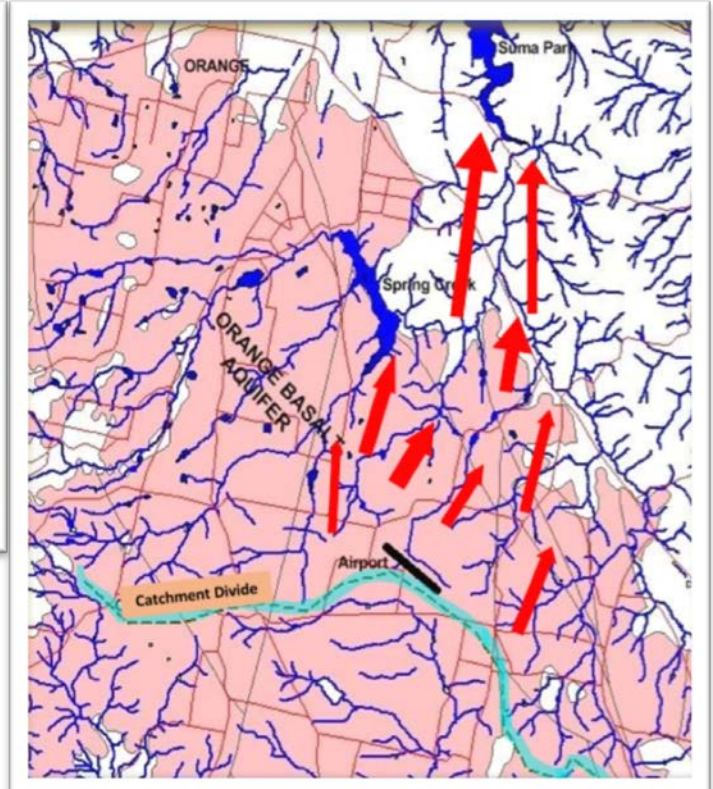
Attached reference maps

cc. Orange Region Water Security Alliance, ECCO Orange, Spring Terrace Water Group

Proposed Industrial Rezoning location



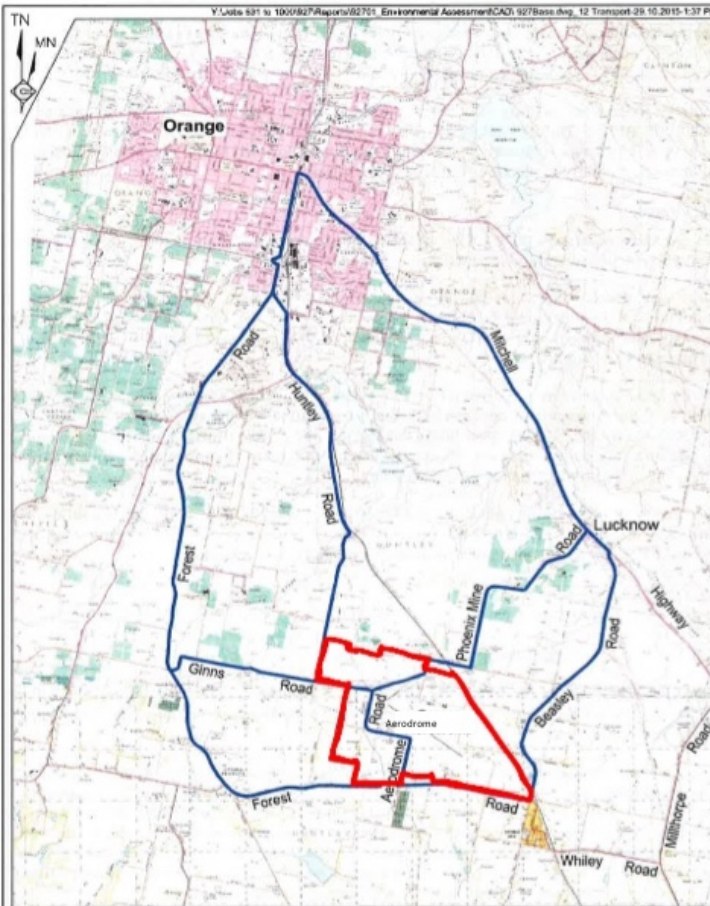
Canobolas - Basalt Plateau  
Area coloured cream



Red arrows indicate surface water flow,  
Pink area is the Basalt Aquifer

ORANGE CITY COUNCIL  
Orange Aerodrome Industrial and Technology Park

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
Report No. 927/01



SCALE 1:80 000 (A4)

REFERENCE  
— OAITP Boundary  
— Existing Access to Orange Aerodrome

Figure 12

LOCAL ROAD NETWORK

Red line is the boundary of the  
proposed Industrial Estate