

Mr J McMaster
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28 April 2021

Non-potable Water Review
Economic & Financial Group
Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
GPO Box 158
CANBERRA ACT 2601

NON-POTABLE WATER REVIEW

I am making this submission as the Captain of the Magpies Belconnen Golf Club, independent of any submission submitted by the Magpies Sports Club, the lessee of the golf course. My role is voluntary and is primarily concerned with the conduct of competition golf at our course.

Our club is the ONLY client of treated effluent from the LMWQCC provided by the wholly government owned monopoly provider, ICON Water. There is no alternate supplier of this type, or any other source of water available to us. We have no other source of water available due to our geographic location on top of a hill with limited dam capacity and associated stormwater run-off and are totally reliant on a stable, sustainable and appropriately priced water supply from ICON to maintain our course, particularly during periods of extreme heat and drought.

ICON Water's 'Standard Contract' for treated water from the LMWQCC has been developed 'in-house' and has never been tested on the open market. It endeavours to set a price of 75% potable water rate for a product that can ONLY be used for irrigation purposes. During negotiations with ICON, this document has been held over our head as a 'unless we agree otherwise, you will be on our Standard Contract.'

ICON releases over 90 million litres of treated effluent into the Murrumbidgee River system daily. This water can then be extracted in NSW, just 4 km downstream, for as little as \$0.07 per kilolitre. ICON's anticipated charge to us is \$3.70. (Our current rate is around \$2.40).

There is absolutely no justification for such an outrageous pricing regime. We accept that there are costs associated with maintaining supply pipes and associated infrastructure and in actually pumping water to us. In a submission on Secondary Water Use to the ICRC in January 2012, ACTEW (ICON's former self) identified such costs as \$0.70 per kilolitre, or around \$0.85 in today's terms. We expect to pay a fair price for treated water, but cannot afford such a large and unjustifiable price as identified above.

Without a guaranteed reasonable pricing structure for us to access non-potable water from the LMWQCC, our course and Club are at great risk of closure.

Our course has implemented a range of strategies to reduce water consumption as far as practicable and to lessen our reliance on non-potable water. We are a privately owned public course with no access available for the limited government grant funding for major infrastructure upgrades such as expanded damming which are available from time to time for not-for-profit Clubs. We have no financial capacity to undertake such works and the course owner has no interest in such matters. Without such financial injections, we have no capacity to upgrade our water storage capabilities and must rely on the supply of treated effluent from the LMWQCC.

We provide a much-needed green zone between the existing suburbs of Holt and Macgregor and the new subdivisions of Gininderry estate. Through our remnant grassy woodlands, our course provides an essential corridor for the vulnerable Superb Parrot and other endangered bird species. Our course is a welcome haven for wildlife, residents, members and guests that must be maintained.

The health benefits of an active golfing community are well documented and the financial benefits to the health system alone would far outweigh the short-term gain from ICON Water's profiteering.

I hope that the Review recognises our vulnerable position in any negotiations with ICON and sets an appropriate structure for fair, reasonable and equitable prices for now and the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J McMaster', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

John McMaster

Two solid black rectangular redaction boxes. The first is a small rectangle, and the second is a longer rectangle positioned directly below the first.