



Northern Territory Branch  
International Association of Hydrogeologists  
PO Box 95  
Palmerston NT  
0831

23rd February 2015

Controller of Water Resources  
PO Box 1120  
Alice Springs  
NT 0871

To the Controller of Water Resources

*Reference: Notice of Intention to make Water Extraction Licence Decision Pursuant to section 71B of the Water Act – Rocky Hill proposed increase in annual extraction to 3,125ML from bores RN10669, RN17035, RN17817, RN17642 and additional bores.*

The International Association of Hydrogeologists (IAH) is a scientific and educational charitable organisation for scientists, engineers, water managers and other professionals working in the fields of groundwater resource planning, management and protection. Our mission is to further the understanding, wise use and protection of groundwater resources throughout the world.

IAH endeavours to raise awareness of groundwater issues and work with national and international agencies to promote the use of groundwater to ensure ready access to safe drinking water. IAH also promotes the protection of aquifers against pollution, the improvement of aquifer storage and the management of groundwater resources to assure the sustainability of groundwater-dependent ecosystems.

In keeping with internationally accepted principals for the sustainable management of groundwater resources, It is the IAH NT Branch's position that, where there is a finite and constrained amount of potable quality groundwater, and the security of the municipal water supply for local communities is entirely or substantially dependant on groundwater resources, the priority use for that water should be for potable water supply. This is supported by the beneficial uses listed in the Alice Springs Water Resource Strategy 2007: "To protect water supplies for current and future generations the beneficial uses of all waters with salinities under 500 mg/L will be declared to be to public water supply, excluding existing agricultural, rural stock and domestic entitlements".

Power and Water Corporation have identified the aquifer at Rocky Hill to be the next water source for Alice Springs potable water supply; the current water source at Roe Creek is finite and it will be

necessary for PWC to put significant investment into water resource investigation and infrastructure to move to the Rocky Hill supply.

As the Rocky Hill Grape Block lies directly above Alice Springs' future drinking groundwater supply, there is a potential risk of land based pollution from the development to this strategic potable water supply. Further, there is a potential risk to the good quality groundwater aquifer (<500mg/l) from the proposed extraction of poorer quality water (500-1000mg/l TDS) from a zone adjacent it. Any decision to encourage further agricultural activities in this region by granting additional water extraction licences should be supported by scientific assessment to demonstrate lack of impact.

A Strategic Work Plan was laid out in the 2007 Alice Springs Water Management Strategy, which included further monitoring and assessment of the groundwater resource. This work program has only been partially completed by DLRM; the 5 year review acknowledged this.

IAH NT Branch is concerned that for Alice Springs to be a sustainable community and to enable sustainable development, sound land and water management is needed to protect the limited groundwater resources which account for all of the municipal water supply for Alice Springs – in terms of quantity and quality. Sound land and water management must be supported by scientific assessment, not just for allocation of the available water but to ensure that utilisation of that water does not pose an unintended risk to groundwater.

Yours Sincerely

IAT NT Branch