

We make this submission as owners of a rural non-residential property of more than 4.5 hectares that is part of the headwaters of the Ourimbah Creek catchment. We are concerned that the Central Coast Council has proposed a stormwater drainage charge of \$5,427.81 from 2019-20 on non-residential properties greater than 4.5ha.

The Central Coast Council's submission to IPART includes this increase to the stormwater drainage charge (see Price Submission Summary Table 2 on page 4 Stormwater Drainage - Non-residential Properties >45,000sq m).

Concerns

We have managed the natural resources on our property for 25 years to minimise the rate of storm runoff by protecting the natural vegetation on the whole of the property. Outside our control on this property is an easement under electricity pylons that is managed by the pylon's owner, Energy Australia.

It is our impression that the proposed stormwater levy does not adequately take into account the efforts of us as landowners to manage the natural ecosystem under our care so that it minimises the runoff in storm events, while maintaining streamflow under average conditions. In our case, we have installed an earth dam at the highest point of the property, where storm flow is stored so that it can slowly infiltrate the groundwater. Below this, we maintain dense rainforest that protects our tributary stream of Ourimbah Creek. Such runoff as inevitably drains from roads on the plateau above, with sediment derived from those roads, is trapped very effectively as soon as it enters our property.

Our house is lower in the catchment, on the floodplain of the Ourimbah Creek. For 30 years we have been acutely aware of the importance of natural vegetation in slowing peak runoff. As local volunteer members of Palm Grove/Ourimbah Creek Landcare, we have been actively involved in caring for the natural vegetation of the catchment since its founding in 1998. It is our impression that little account has been taken of such volunteer efforts by the catchment residents in formulating proposals to finance storm runoff management.

We conclude that an increase in the stormwater drainage charge as proposed in the Central Coast Council's submission to IPART would be arbitrary in nature as it would not take into account the efforts of owners who are managing their properties in ways that enhance ecosystem services to the whole community. If the proposal were adopted, such an outcome would discourage rather than aid those residents who see their management of ecosystem services as essential to the health of the Ourimbah Creek catchment. It would encourage the attitude "My efforts don't matter, so why bother?"

Brian Patterson, Eileen Patterson

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We both give permission for this submission to be published, together with our names.