

Water Supply at Adventure Bay (notes prior to 2019 community forum)

At the BIEN AGM I was asked with Linda Champine to review the arrangements regarding extraction of water from the aquifer at Adventure Bay, and the role of Council in considering water issues when dealing with DAs. Unfortunately, Linda has had other issues to deal with, and I am thus solely responsible for this report.

The BIEN request resulted from concerns expressed at the meeting on demand for water from the aquifer, principally from commercial and tourist accommodation operators, and for new developments the failure of Council to require water collection and the capacity of storage that approached the amount required for a fire tank and the use of water in the proposed development, including perhaps a spa bath.

To further my review, I discussed the history of the aquifer with Jon Doole from Kingborough Council (KC). It appears that Councils have limited responsibility with regard to water issues, but KC accepts it has the responsibility to "monitor groundwater conditions in unconsolidated coastal Quaternary sediments at Adventure Bay as part of a broader Council initiative to investigate and mitigate risks associated with climate change and vulnerable coastlines in the municipality." To this end, they have had regular groundwater monitoring survey reports provided by William C Cromar (Bill).

The most recent report was for August 2019. Much of the report covers measurements in the various monitoring holes. Most of the report would not be understandable or of great interest to the majority of the community without further explanation. One comment that Bill made was that "Overall, groundwater level logging information and manual measurements suggest groundwater levels have fallen in the area since the same time last year.manual measurements are deeper than they have ever been recorded by between 5-7cm."

Bill also made some recommendations that include that monitoring and sampling be continued regularly, and that "Drilling one exploratory bore for a supplementary water supply from fractured hard-rock aquifers in the Adventure Bay area should be considered by Council"

Jon conveyed that the position KC takes is that it does not have the power to impose conditions relating to water collection and storage. He did not say whether he supports this position, but he did agree that there is no impetus for change as KC is not impacted by increased demand for water from the aquifer.

Jon provided me with a copy of an email of 4/12/19 he received from Frances Smith of TasWater which advised that there was a requirement for a CCMP (?master plan?) ".....to determine the long-term water arrangements for Bruny Island" which needed to be "..... completed this financial year which will require extensive community consultation to address significant external stakeholder sensitivities." She also advised that TasWater had concerns that the aquifer was at high risk from impact from onsite wastewater management systems at adjoining properties and that it was vulnerable to salt water ingress from storm surge events in the short to medium term and climate change in the longer term.

Eleanor Talbot, (TasWater's Acting Manager Stakeholder and Community Engagement) advised that, as far as TasWater is concerned Bruny Island presents different issues to other parts of their jurisdiction, and that they shared concerns about Councils' non-preparedness to impose conditions regarding water collection and storage. TasWater have been looking at potential changes to the planning scheme to overcome the problem. She indicated that there would be community consultation in the not too distant future but was not in a position to provide an estimate of timing. Eleanor conveyed that BICA and BIEN would be contacted prior to consultation with the community.

In my opinion it is not appropriate for developments to be dependent on regular water supplies from the aquifer. It is accepted that the derivation of standards by Councils on which to base decisions regarding water storage would present difficulties. However, recent approvals have been for developments where demand for water from the aquifer is undeniable. The preparation of guidelines for imposing conditions in these cases are, to the best of my knowledge, within Council's ambit and should not be difficult to develop.

David Boyer
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