

29 September, 2011

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Reservoir Operation Rules
Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water
P O Box 481
HORSHAM VIC 3402

Dear Sir/Madam

LAKE LONSDALE

Please find enclosed a submission by Lake Lonsdale Action Group in relation to the Reservoir Operating rules proposed by GMMWater for Lake Lonsdale.

The submission, along with considerable supporting documentation has been provided to Council by the Group which we now forward for your consideration.

Council would be happy to facilitate any further discussion with the Group in relation to Lake Lonsdale.

Yours faithfully



JIM NOLAN
DIRECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE & ENVIRONMENT



LAKE LONSDALE ACTION GROUP

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RESERVOIR OPERATING RULES LAKE LONSDALE

Lake Lonsdale is a very important part of the Wimmera Mallee system. It has significant input into not only water supply to our region, but also social, economic cultural and environmental aspects. Lake Lonsdale has a capacity of 65,480 ML and an annual average inflow of 52,000 ML. Our group the Lake Lonsdale Action Group (LLAG) has several concerns to the future operating rule for this lake.

ECONOMIC: Lake Lonsdale is a very important part of our tourism promotion. It is central to the Grampians /Stawell tourism industry and has an economic value of approximately \$2.5M per annum *when holding water*. It also creates much needed employment. This last year has proved what an important part it has in our tourist industry by the number of camping and boating activities. It has by far had the most activity of any lake in the Wimmera Mallee. The guarantee of water being held in Lake Lonsdale will also enable our council to not only promote the lake but also develop future infrastructure to enhance our region, our tourism and the lake.

CULTURAL: Lake Lonsdale has a very significant indigenous cultural history with many sacred sites in the lake itself. This is acknowledged by GWMW by the areas of the lake that have been fenced off to the general public. The Martang Aboriginal Party support our effort to retain at least 70% of natural capacity of water in the lake. These very significant Aboriginal sites are recorded by

Aboriginal Affairs Victoria and are protected under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006. These sites must be protected.

SOCIAL: Since being built, Lake Lonsdale has had a very popular social role for the region. Many summer days have been enjoyed by visitors and locals with boating, swimming, fishing, yabbying, picnics and bbq`s over our summer months. It has been an important part of our social culture over many years. This is now not happening while the lake is regularly being drained. It is important that this social activity is restored, and can be with a lake with water being kept in it. Lake Lonsdale has a very family social aspect, where it is very popular with family camping around the lake in our summer months. It is surprising the amount of local families that stay in our area and go and camp at the lake.

ENVIRONMENT: Lake Lonsdale was originally a natural swamp (known as Cafrae`s Swamp), and was an important place for meeting for both clans and tribes. This swamp was dammed and completed in 1903 for bulk water backup supply for the Wimmera. It is part of the Mount William Creek system. Also it has a vital environmental importance to not only the lake, but also to the entire Mount William Creek system. Maintaining water in the lake is fundamental to the protection of the environment of the upper reaches of the river. This section is vital in maintaining significant ecological and environmental aspects to the lake itself, as well as the lower reaches. The lower reaches also needs environmental flows in summer months as does the Wimmera River. Why is it important for the Wimmera River to be allocated environmental water, but not the upper and lower parts of Mount William Creek, when it plays such an important role in maintaining ecological and environmental properties? Lake Lonsdale has a capacity to be an excellent breeding ground for fish, which are an important part of water quality. When water is released from the lake fish then spread to the lower reaches enhancing water quality. Every time the lake is drained it destroys the entire eco and environmental balance, which not only affects fish but also the entire flora and

fauna balance that relies on the Mount William / Lonsdale system for its survival.

The LLAG requests that:

1. GWMWater and the CMA be required to reference the capacity for Lake Lonsdale in terms of volume, not as percentage of volume, with the full capacity of Lake Lonsdale set at 65,000ML.
2. Water levels or volume in Lake Lonsdale to be retained throughout the year with the lowest level to be no less than 46,000 ML (ie. At the end of the summer season). Except in extreme dry circumstances.
3. Lake Lonsdale is formally recognized as a significant water body with social, economic, cultural and environmental values at least to the riverine systems and other lakes throughout the Wimmera and Mallee (ie. Lake Lonsdale is not simply a storage lake or water transfer facility for other water bodies in the region).
4. GWMWater and the Wimmera CMA be required to consult with and include the Lake Lonsdale Action Group (Inc) in any formal working parties or management groups, either current or future, to ensure a better path of communication between key stakeholders, users and the community.
5. GWMWater be required to invest in the recreational facilities surrounding the lake and to maintain to an acceptable standard those facilities not limited to camp areas, boat ramps, fishing areas, access points, public amenities and the maintenance of water heights.

OTHER OPERATING RULES

The Wimmera River Basin relies on primarily the Wimmera River, Mt William Creek and the Mc Kenzie Creek for its water supplies. It has a mean annual inflow of 316,400 ML. Water Storages available for water harvesting and storage include Taylors Lake (36,000 ml), Pine Lake (64,000ml of which 49,000 ml is above the outlet pipe), Green Lake (5350ml), Dock Lake (4420ml), Lake Fyans (18,460 ml) and Toolondo (106,500 ml). These holding storages have a capacity of over 220,000 ml. The above storages are not natural filling storages and rely on being filled from channels. Other main Water Storages in the system include Lake Lonsdale (65,500 ml), Lake Bellfield (78,560 ml) and Lake Wartook (29,300 ml). These are lakes filled from natural flows, with a holding capacity of over 173,000 ml. A total capacity of over 398,000ml is available to secure our future needs.

Rocklands Reservoir with a capacity of 348,310 ml can also supply the Wimmera Region when needed in dry periods.

These lakes, and the harvesting of water to them is vital to protect our water supplies in future droughts and dry periods that will again occur. We must learn by the devastating effect the recent drought had on our region. With an average mean annual water inflow of over 316,000ml and the capacity that our available storages are capable of holding, we must ensure that enough water is held in reserve for domestic, recreational, social, cultural and environmental needs for all communities.

CONCERNS

The alteration to the Maximum Operational levels (MOL) is a concern as it limits the amount of water that can be held in our storages. These lakes have been in operation for up to and over 100 years with no adverse effects to them. It seems that no lesson has been learnt from our recent drought, when our storages were constantly under 10% of capacity. A drop in operational supply to 80% of true capacity is a loss of over 80,000 ml to the system. Full capacity must be restored for future water security.

Lake Lonsdale Action Group Inc

President: Kerri Martin

Vice President: Ray Howard