

**Cardinia Reservoir Community Meeting  
Friday, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2005 2.30pm**

**Held at:** 55 Lavender Farm Road, Emerald

**Present:**

Linda Hamilton	(Local Resident)
Davina Lohm	(Local Resident)
Margaret McGarry	(Local Resident)
Deborah Moore	(Local Resident)
Ben Pratt	(Melbourne Water Community Relations)
Peter Scott	(Melbourne Water Science/Research)

Notes on the meeting: rather than minuting the meeting which ran for more than an hour we have divided the discussions into relevant topics. This should assist the reader understand the concerns of all parties without having to read 20 or so pages of material that often covered the same ground.

Ben started the discussion with a statement that Melbourne Water had a responsibility to manage the Catchment area, and that they are now in Stage Two of that planning process which involves gathering information and consulting with the community about management strategies. From the beginning Ben assured all parties that, at least for the foreseeable future the emus were in no danger of being destroyed as part of their management program.

Ben presented the Community Information Bulletin dated June 2005 to the participants of the meeting.

**Discussion regarding the justification for calling the Reservoir emus "Pest" animals was held and noted that:**

- ❑ Many other animals in the Reservoir are introduced "pests" such as foxes, deer, rabbits, feral cats, however, we questioned the accuracy of calling emus, wallabies, wombats, kangaroos as indigenous fauna, pest animals
- ❑ No scientific testing of these animals has been implemented so far to test for the presence of the parasite cryptosporidium.
- ❑ Little or no damage to the environment is thought to be done by emus to property according to the DPI website.
- ❑ 2,800 hectares of Reservoir area would be able to sustain large numbers of emu population (according to DPI) with potential reproduction rate of 5.5 chicks per year per pair
- ❑ If the emus are considered a risk to the quality of the water, why have Melbourne Water taken more than 6 years, perhaps as many as 10 years to address the situation?

**Discussion was also held regarding there being no real evidence/proof of the emus' origin:**

- ❑ Melbourne Water's Forestry management staff have reported that the emus had been "dumped" by an emu farm possibly six years ago
- ❑ Further assumptions that the emu farm may have had Western Australian stock, which could cause problems if crossbreeding occurred with Victorian indigenous emus
- ❑ According to Melbourne Water current research regarding *Cryptosporidium* oocysts existing in the soil in significant numbers are only evident in the soil and runoff (washoff) where cattle farming was intense. (Canadian Research)
- ❑ *Cryptosporidium* have only been detected "occasionally" in the water tested throughout the whole of the Melbourne Water storages. It is not known if any have ever been found in the waters of Cardinia Reservoir.

**Melbourne Water's planned research will try to ascertain:**

- ❑ If there is an unreasonable risk posed by the current population of emus within the reservoir
- ❑ Sustainable and humane management of animal species within the reservoir, including fertility control, poison, traps and shooting.
- ❑ If relocation of the emus is possible. Healesville Sanctuary and Melbourne Zoo has been and will be consulted further in regard to safely catching and transporting the birds. OH&S issues are a concern.
- ❑ If emus, or any other native species living in the reservoir carry significant populations of *cryptosporidium*. (Testing this hypothesis could be costly. Peter stated that this may not be a cost effective option.)
- ❑ The ongoing concerns of the community's reactions to management strategies.

**Other issues discussed:**

- ❑ Peter spoke of Robin Gasser (Melbourne University Vet School) who has studied scats from animals in Melbourne Water catchment areas.
- ❑ Peter talked about the need to look at all the risks, critical control and methods of monitoring the barriers, animals, water quality. Mentioned Paddock to Plate as a management concept. We noted that animals are going in and out of the reservoir constantly.
- ❑ Kangaroo and wallaby population management appears not to be a concern to Melbourne Water. Residents were keen to find out why native Kangaroos were able to be managed, but Emus not.
- ❑ Concern by residents about the fact that a permit was sought and issued for shooting the emus. Ben stated that they were never going to shoot the Emus. This was refuted, as Melbourne Water staff had previously notified residents of the impending shooting.
- ❑ Continued assurance that no action will be taken by Melbourne Water without community knowledge

- Residents suggested the wording of the community bulletin be changed to reflect the outcome of the discussions. In particular residents were concerned that the emus were referred to as “pests”. Calling the emus “introduced” without there being any proof of such. The use of emotive language .
- The barriers surrounding the reservoir are not maintained to a standard that keeps animals from wandering in and out. Kangaroos are seen jumping the fence, while wombats, foxes, cats and wild dogs drift in and out of the reservoir without impediment.

**Further community assistance in continuing research and seeking information:**

- The residents made it clear that they are willing to assist in any way possible with the proposed research and that they were keen to have the results of any research shared with them.
- Peter Scott suggested that it would be helpful if we could ascertain the accuracy of current folklore regarding the emus’ origins.

**Since the meeting residents have either ascertained and/or following up on:**

- Prior to the land being acquired by Melbourne Water for the reservoir the land was used for mixed farming and therefore may have cryptosporidium oocysts as a result of the cattle that grazed the land.
- The original Bimbimbie Australian fauna park is thought to have been located where the Cardinia reservoir is now.
- If there were any emu farms or indigenous emus in the area? Or did the emus just appear suddenly approx. 6 – 10 years ago?
- There may be emus on a private property in the Narree Warren – Cranbourne area. We know that there is a property in Emerald near the reservoir (Glenbrook Road) that had emus at one stage, but it was not an emu farm.