

BASS SYDNEY FISHING CLUB INC

17/12/03

Mr J Harnwell,
Fishing World Magazine.

Dear Jim,

I have just received from Hornsby Council a letter confirming how pleased they are to inform me that on the 10th of December Council, in Association with the University of Technology, Sydney, released 12,000 Bass fingerlings into Berowra Creek at Galston Gorge. I was also informed that the fingerlings were tagged (one can only assume that they were chemically marked) and that this tagging “ will provide valuable information on the behaviour and survival of Australian Bass and the ecological health of Berowra Creek.” To anyone unfamiliar with chemical marking, the only way to tell if the fish has been marked is to kill it and check it’s otolith bone, so their research will involve catching and killing fish in the future.

Bass Sydney representatives had heard about this release prior to it happening and contacted Hornsby Council and Fisheries to try and have it cancelled. Fisheries informed us that the stocking would go ahead and that Council had made an application based on a survey they had commissioned in 2000, which showed a decline in Bass around Galston Gorge. Obviously the drought had nothing to do with this(???). The aim of the stocking is to replenish depleted stocks (12000 is a hell of a lot of replenishment) and to provide for a recreational fishery (where?). Anyone who has fished around the Galston Gorge area will know that there are fish there and dumping another 12000 into such a small creek must have disastrous effects on the food chain, even if there is only a 10 percent survival rate of the stocked fingerlings. The letter from Fisheries also stated that the nominated sites were high in the catchment and that natural recruitment was inhibited by a series of natural rock falls. Now, I live in Galston and I know that there are fish, and different sized ones at that, above the Gorge, yet the release was at the Gorge, below the NATURAL BARRIERS, the ones the fish have been contending with for possibly hundreds of years. One can only wonder as to what Council’s research will find in the future, will it be that we have interfered with nature once again and wiped out some creature that could not compete with such large and un-natural numbers of fish? Or might it be that we have introduced some kind of genetic defect into the wild population? Who knows? All I know is that by then it may be too late. I may be wrong and I sincerely hope that I am, but the consequences may just change the whole ecology of the creek, all because the research was **NOT done FIRST.**

How many rivers and creeks are we prepared to risk by this kind of stocking? Bass distribution has not changed, only the population, and better habitat management can fix that.

I also hope that the money did not come from our licence fees.

“IF WE TAKE CARE OF THE ENVIROMENT, THE FISH WILL TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES.”

Yours Faithfully,

Alan Izzard.
Pres. Bass Sydney.