



To
The Macleay Argus
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Letter to the Editor

In a recent interview reported in the online and print editions of The Macleay Argus, Oxley MP Melinda Pavey encouraged the Macleay residents “to learn for themselves” about the Oven Mountain Pumped Hydro project. The problem is that it is difficult to find the facts and there is a lot of misinformation in the community – as proven by several of Ms Pavey’s reported statements. It seems neither Ms Pavey nor the Argus reporter have checked their facts.

The current plan for Oven Mountain Pumped Hydro project aims to generate 900MW, **not** 600MW as reported by the Argus.

The proponents have estimated that there will be 600 jobs during construction, **not** “up to 3000 jobs” as Ms Pavey is quoted.

The report on the Argus website says, “Macleay Valley residents expressed concerns about the project’s relationship with China.” The much reduced print version addresses this point with the curious quote “...it’s not China. It’s actually an Australian invention by a former local”.

Pumped hydro technology is most certainly not the invention by a local, it was developed in Italy and Switzerland in the early 20th century.

Community members have indeed raised concerns about the source of the investments and about the eventual financial benefits going overseas. Ms Pavey says that we are dealing with “old Commonwealth money”. What does that mean?

The facts are that the company currently proposing the scheme is OMPS Pty Ltd in partnership Alinta Energy (AE). The owners of the private property where the project is located have formed the company Hoshac Pty Ltd. Alinta is often referred to as an Australian company, because of their operations in several Australian States. However, it

is part of Chow Tai Fook Enterprises Limited (CTFE) - owned by the Cheng family with head-quarters in Hongkong and registered in the British Virgin Islands. The territory of Hong Kong was transferred to the People's Republic of China in 1997. According to one of the OMPS directors at the recent community drop-in meeting in Kempsey, Hoshac and OMPS will sell their interests in the development to Alinta once the project is operational.

At the community drop-in meetings the question was raised if the costly road access from Kempsey will be financed by the investors. Ms Pavey said "We have now guaranteed \$227 million in natural disaster relief funding to improve the Kempsey to Armidale road". This means tax and rate payers' money.

And last not least, Ms Pavey asserted that the Oven Mountain reservoirs will contribute to the Kempsey Shire water security in times of drought. This has been questioned in submissions to NSW government's North Coast Regional Water Strategy. It is highly unlikely that the reservoirs would be drained and electricity generation stopped for the benefit of the downriver community. Even if that were the case, water released during a drought would soon be absorbed into the dried-out riverbed and not even reach Bellbrook.

So far, the most reliable information about the Oven Mountain project can be found on the NSW Planning Portal. <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/oven-mountain-pumped-hydro-energy-storage-project>

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on behalf of Save Our Macleay River Inc (SOMR)