

Armidale dump plan a worry for our water

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By Sue Paterick

ARMIDALE Dumaresq Council is undertaking studies for a landfill near the banks of the Gara River - that eventually flows into the Macleay River and becomes our drinking water.

The site chosen was one of 30 and investigations over several years could cost up to \$2million.

But Armidale mayor Brian Chetwynd said if studies showed progressively that the site was not suitable another would have to be chosen.

The site is 13km east of Armidale on the Waterfall Way.

Gara Valley Environment Preservation Association member Christian Quaife said it was 4km in a straight line to the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park.

A 2002 National Parks and Wildlife Service report on objectives of management for World Heritage sites confirmed water quality was poor in rivers upstream of the national park, including the Gara.

The report also stated that within the Macleay River system there were excess nutrient levels and heavy sediment from erosion of tableland agricultural and grazing land, so it was apparent contamination from the upper catchment could affect the Macleay's water quality.

But Cr Chetwynd said it was the council's aim to develop a landfill that would take only inert material and thus prevent contamination.

The Environmental Protection Agency told the council about 10 years ago its current landfill was reaching capacity.

"We'll know in about 12 months as a result of initial studies whether or not we should pursue that site," he said.

"And even though recommendations are to have a landfill in the area we're looking at a Class Two landfill that only takes inert materials."

Cr Chetwynd said the current tip site had full separation facilities that would continue to operate even when the new site was built and all refuse would go there.

He said Armidale led the State in its council type for recycling.

But Mr Quaife said a council officer told him there would be six roadside rubbish trucks per day taking refuse directly to the proposed landfill site.

"How could council regulate what people put in their bins?" he asked.

Mr Quaife believes the council should investigate other sites in other areas if the landfill were to be a regional one and said there might be better sites not near a World Heritage Area.

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