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Sent: [REDACTED]
To: DPIE W Regional Water Strategies Mailbox
Cc: office@pavey.minister.nsw.gov.au
Subject: SUBMISSION - FNC Water Strategy

SUBMISSION - FNC Water Strategy
13th December 2020

Dear DPIE and State Water Minister,

I am a resident of The Channon, the village immediately below the proposed Dunoon Dam in Northern NSW. I am a mother of 4 boys who are growing up in this community, surrounded by the uncertainty of the looming Dunoon dam proposal. I have a private naturopathic business and am very involved and active in community issues.

I am writing this submission as part of your feedback request regarding the Far North Coast Water Strategy Draft.

Firstly, thank you for the extensive work you have done. It is immense. I seek to comment on just one part of it - the information provided to you by Rous County Council regarding Future Water 2060 project, which features the proposed Dunoon Dam.

Rous County Council has misled you.

The fact that the Dunoon Dam is mentioned on page 131 in your FNC draft report, but fails to include that there is widespread community opposition to the dam, especially on cultural heritage and ecological grounds, is very concerning. Byrrill Creek Dam however, mentioned in the dot point above on p131, states it could be highly contentious due to cultural and environmental concerns.

We, the community of the Northern Rivers, are appalled that Rous would omit to mention cultural heritage and ecological concerns relating to the Dunoon Dam. These were the exact reasons the dam was knocked back roughly 10 years ago, and the assessments done at the time have not changed anything on the ground (ecological or cultural heritage significance).

There is widespread opposition to the dam. There is NO social licence. The recent submissions to Rous regarding their Future Water 2060 report resulted in almost 1290 submissions, of which 91% opposed the dam.

We are also deeply disturbed to find that Lismore City Council and Rous County Council had been asking the Dunoon dam to be added to the State Government agenda, BEFORE the community consultation period when 1290 of us wrote submissions to Rous in good faith concerning the Water Futures 2060 report. Failure of due process exacerbates the lack of trust the community now has in Rous regarding the Dunoon dam and lack of transparency.

State water planners, please listen and rectify the misinformation regarding the proposed Dunoon Dam.

My key concerns regarding the proposed dam are:

Ecological

- 6.7% of the remaining 1% of Big Scrub rainforest would be destroyed, damaged or fragmented.
- The rainforest on the dam site is a recognised Endangered Ecological Community. No offsets are acceptable (or effective) for the destruction of this.
- Koala habitat and corridors - 71% of North Coast koalas in firegrounds perished in the 2019/2020 fires. They are on the edge of extinction. No more habitat destruction is ok.
- Platypus and other threatened species. Same as above, all habitat is important for declining populations.

Cultural Heritage

- The Wijabul Wia-bal people are saying clearly: NO to Dunoon Dam. There has been no proper consultation with them as a group, and this could well be likened to Juukun Caves destruction in WA. Rous Tinto instead of Rio Tinto. The traditional custodians must be respected and listened to.

Social

- This is also personal to me because I have immediate family members in the vicinity of the proposed dam site. My mother in law's home would be 350m from the 40m high dam wall. My parents are on one of the farms immediately below the dam wall. Hydrologists have said they would not live below a dam like that in terms of safety. Rous itself acknowledged that in severe flood events, if the dam is full, that catastrophic flooding could occur downstream. Loss of life could occur.

Other water options haven't been fully explored

- Experts from outside the Rous region (such as Water Services Association of Australia with their All Options on the Table report), are saying clearly that a mix of complementary options is needed, and that in fact dams are a risky infrastructure that do not provide climate/drought resilience.
- Rainfall independent options such as purified recycled water and green powered desalination need to be explored.
- Roof water harvesting such as the case study in Warrnambool is important for new developments.
- System-wide water efficiency, as outlined by Prof. Stuart White from UTS makes massive sense.

Since July 2020 when Rous announced with renewed fervour that the Dunoon Dam was back on the agenda, I have spent about 30 hours a week volunteering my time to help increase water literacy in the Northern Rivers and raise awareness about the concerns to do with the dam. This has seriously impacted my ability to work for money, so there has been a real hard-cost for my family.

It is deeply disappointing when community members such as myself have to do unpaid work to help educate the general public and protect heritage, when the paid staff and government bodies are misleading a whole region down an erroneous track towards a destructive all-eggs-in-one-basket dam instead of being leaders in creating a truly 21st century resilient water system we can all be proud of.

I have spent countless hours helping put together a resource which references all expert reports and concerns. They can be found on this website: www.waternorthernrivers.org/reports

Thankyou for reading my feedback. I hope the State water planners take on board what water experts and the community are saying. Smart water options - No Dunoon dam.

Yours sincerely,

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