

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: SUBMISSION - Far North Coast Water Strategies

This email is my submission regarding the Draft Regional Water Strategy plan for the Far North Coast of NSW. My name is [REDACTED] and I have resided in the Lismore area for the last 33 years, including several years of living at The Channon. I was a Senior Lecturer in the School of Arts and Social Science at Southern Cross University, where I worked for 20 years, until my recent retirement.

Taking the document as a whole, I would like to congratulate the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) on their exhaustive identification of the many options for securing and improving water quality and supply in my region. I believe many of them would make a very positive contribution to achieving this end and await further developments.

However, there is one option in particular that I believe should be taken off the list. That is the creation of a new dam - dubbed the Dunoon Dam - which would flood The Channon gorge to create a new water supply for an expected population increase. My reasons for opposing the Dunoon Dam proposal are as follows:

Firstly, The Channon Gorge is a unique ecosystem containing many endangered species of plants and animals that would be destroyed by the flooding. It contains 62 hectares of a lowland rainforest endangered ecological community and is situated on sandstone, which I understand is a rarity in itself. There are currently nine threatened flora species according to the 2013 Terrestrial Ecology Impact Assessment Report and 17 threatened fauna species on the site have also been identified. Also impacted will be koalas, platypus and native fish, all of whom will likely either decline in numbers or face extinction due to various factors such as habitat fragmentation and/or destruction. Koalas, for example, need their corridors kept intact, whilst dam walls, weirs and sediment load smothering would severely reduce the platypus population (2012 Aquatic Ecology Assessment, p. 61). In this world of vanishing habitat due to population pressure, clearing, severe bushfires and rising temperatures, it is surely crucial to preserve what we have, rather than drowning it and thus losing it for all time.

Secondly, the site is of cultural significance to the local Wijibul Wiabal people and therefore should be preserved. I understand that Rous County Council has consulted several times with the Wijibul Wiabal on this matter, seemingly to persuade them to reverse their opposition to the destruction of their culturally significant sites. This surely is unacceptable after the recent tragedy of the Juukan Caves.

Furthermore, there is a number of other reasons to justify removing the Dunoon Dam as an option for plans regarding the Far North Coast water supply. Chief among them is that a great many of the people of the region are vehemently opposed to the Dunoon dam on many counts, including those mentioned

above as well as that:

* Rous County Council (RCC) has been less than transparent in its dealings with the public despite the fact that over 91% of submissions made opposed the dam option and over 300 of the 1290 submissions made were from individuals who wrote their own submissions, demonstrating genuine opposition. We hear also that Rous identified the dam as their preferred option well before making it public, which raises questions about whether they have genuinely considered the other viable options at all.

* Dams can be seen as old technology now: they are expensive and carry many downsides, but RCC does not appear keen to implement a suite of measures to save water (water efficiency), recycle water or consider other options as set out in the FCN Water Strategies document. The use of rainwater tanks, for example, does not seem to have been considered by RCC, yet harvesting rainwater from domestic roofs could significantly assist householders and reduce their use of piped water from the current reservoir at Rocky Creek.

* Rous's Future Water 2060 Project appears to be premised on the Dunoon Dam, which suggests RCC is ignoring the wishes of the people of the Far North Coast. Your own document acknowledges at Option 24 that "fostering a strong sense of engagement from communities is critical to meeting regional water strategy objectives" Social license is an important part of any contentious project, yet Rous does not appear to be listening. The consultation I attended was run by scientists, and when asked who makes the final decision, they replied that it would be down to the Department and the politicians. Given the level of pork barrelling and even corruption that has recently been exposed in relation to the current NSW government, the populace can hardly have faith in their ability to make fair, informed and impartial decisions that take into account the matters I am outlining to you. In addition, they will no doubt be lobbied by the Rous County Council to approve their preferred option. The people of the Far North Coast have a history of standing up and defending their land, air and water as was demonstrated by their determined opposition to logging at Terania Creek and the introduction of coal seam gas mining in the region. They prevailed; and they will do so again, should there be a need. I thank you for the opportunity to make a submission and I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

