

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: The proposed Dunoon Dam within the Future Water Project 2060

Dear DPIE

Re: The proposed Dunoon Dam within the Future Water Project 2060

We are in a planetary climate and ecological emergency.

I acknowledge the work done so far by DPIE in developing the Far North Coast Water Strategy. It's a wide-ranging strategy and seeks to address reliable water supply into the future.

The Strategy must not rely too much on Rous's Future Water 2060 project, especially because that plan hinges on the contentious Dunoon Dam, and that the Dunoon dam should no longer be an option in the strategy.

I appreciate the complexity of finding solutions to meet our communities water needs into the future and how this challenge faces so many communities on our planet. That is why now is the time for courageous earth centred thinking, not perpetuating the exploitative and destructive ways of the past. Now is the time for Aboriginal solidarity and fierce defence of biodiversity. If the human species and all living creatures we share this beautiful planet with is to survive – we must act now.

This is why you cannot build this mega dam.

I have lived here on Widjabul-Wybul land for 20 years. I live on a small permaculture community near the proposed Dam site. My household and the other 7 homes on our community live off grid and harvest all our household and garden water from rain water tanks. I am also actively involved in forest regeneration and local environmental and social justice campaigns. I have been in love and in awe of our local rainforests and the abundant life they support since I came here from Canada.

I am strongly opposed to the Dam proposal on this endangered rainforest ecological community and sacred custodial lands of the Widjabul-Wybul people and urge you to choose another option that will value and save water at every step of the water system.

I DO NOT support the proposed The Channon - Dunoon Dam for these reasons:

Lost opportunity to invest in system-wide water efficiency - this is the cheapest fastest way to ensure supply-demand balance. By focussing on system efficiency, Sydney added an additional 950,000 people without a rise in consumption. (Metropolitan Water Plan 2006, NSW Government)(1)

The 21st century is about a suite of smart water options. This dam would be a lost opportunity to make our system fit for the 21st century. It would swallow all resources in one big expensive project. This business as usual thinking is killing life on earth.

The dam would encourage continued inefficient and often wasteful water management by local governments. They would have no incentive to do things differently and we must do things differently. We can no longer take the earth and her precious resources for granted.

Destruction of important Widjabul-Wybul cultural heritage, including burial sites (Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment, 2011)(2) is a complete disregard for the living heritage and continuing connection to the Channon gorge by local Aboriginal people. This process of cultural genocide and racial injustice continues to be perpetrated around the world. The recent action of Rio Tinto destroying 46000 year old Aboriginal heritage site in the Pilbara – exemplifies this injustice. This cannot happen here.

Destruction of The Channon Gorge and its endangered ecological community of lowland rainforest including regionally rare warm temperate rainforest on sandstone, and its threatened flora and fauna species. (Terrestrial Ecology Impact Assessment, 2011)(3). The Lismore Council Declared that we are in a Climate emergency in August of 2019. Preserving existing forest for carbon capture and is a critical step in addressing. As is preserving biodiversity in the midst of our extinction crisis. This is a known koala hot spot and this dam would dived and submerge the population. We must collectively do all we can to prevent koala extinction.

The proposed 'offset' from the loss of this unique rainforest on sandstone with regeneration of degraded land in the buffer zone is problematic because the offset vegetation will never be of the rare high quality and biodiverse dense lowland rainforest that will be submerged.

Councils are required under State planning regulations to "Focus development to areas of least biodiversity sensitivity in the region and implement the 'avoid, minimise, offset' hierarchy to biodiversity, including areas of high environmental value." NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment 2019.

Rous is required to avoid this destruction because there are economically viable and more effective solutions.

Higher prices for consumers due to a 4x increase in the cost of water. Rous general manager, in response to a question from councillor Vanessa Ekins, said he expected a fourfold increase in the cost of supplying water if the dam is built.

The **small population increase** predicted for the four Rous-supplied councils of 12,720(5) between 2020-2060 does not justify such a large and destructive dam. The dam risks diverting expenditure away from more sustainable, flexible and effective solutions.

Catastrophic flooding downstream in worst floods, particularly for the first 3 kilometres below. (Environmental Flows Assessment 2011)(6). Floods, storms and sea level rise are all predicted to increase in the life time of this proposed project.

I SUPPORT these alternatives:

I believe we need to take-action on a suite of smart water options and proven alternatives. Now is the time for renewable and sustainable power and it is also the time to think about our water needs too in a way that doesn't cost the earth.

An **investment in system-wide water efficiency** and strong demand management Analysed, costed and deployed, creating jobs. (I understand Rous has not costed this in creating their future water plan). Existing research over the past decade consistently finds that the best 'bang-for-buck' investment in water supply comes from demand management and identifying savings within the existing supply.(7) (8)

Professor Stuart White from UTS has provided a detailed and costed proposal "The Rous Sustainable Water Program" which shows exactly how and why system-wide optimisation of water use is possible and economical. In comparison, the proposed dam is simply financially, environmentally and socially irresponsible.(9)(Stuart White,2020 www.bit.ly/Prof-Stuart-White-Rous-slides).

Water re-use in various ways, including Purified Recycled Potable water. A wealth of global research and experience already exists regarding potable reuse of water as set out in Water Research Australia's report, Potable Water Reuse: What can Australia learn from global experience? [https://www.waterra.com.au/publications/document-search/?download=1806\(9\)](https://www.waterra.com.au/publications/document-search/?download=1806(9)) Example: The city of Windhoek in Namibia in Southern Africa has been using purified recycled water for 30 years using advanced technology. [https://www.wingoc.com.na/our-history\(10\)](https://www.wingoc.com.na/our-history(10))

Water harvesting (urban runoff; rain tanks): Water tanks on all new (and existing) developments.(11) This builds community resilience - much needed, as the recent extreme bushfire season has shown.

The Australian government advises that: "Depending on tank size and climate, mains water use can be reduced by up to 100%. This in turn can help: reduce the need for new dams or desalination plants; protect remaining environmental flows in rivers; reduce infrastructure operating costs."

Rainwater harvesting also decreases stormwater runoff, thereby helping to reduce local flooding and scouring of creeks.(12) <https://www.yourhome.gov.au/water/rainwater>

Contingency planning would enable Rous to be ready to rapidly implement supply measures if it becomes necessary in times of drought.

Groundwater, where this is environmentally safe. The Australian government provides a lot of information on the ecological impacts and groundwater usage.(13)
<https://www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/what-are-the-ecological-impacts-of-groundwater-drawdown>

With scalable supply alternatives in place, the existing supply from Rocky Creek Dam will be made resilient to anticipated times of drought and projected population growth, without the environmental destruction, social costs, and the over-capitalisation risk of an oversized and unnecessary dam.

In conclusion, I appreciate much work has gone into this already, but I think you will find there is massive community opposition to the mega dam proposal and I think you would also find that this will translate into ongoing protest and direct action blockades if you go ahead with the mega dam development. This all can be mitigated by going back to the drawing board now and looking at a water efficiency and savings at every stage of our water system.

In solidarity with the earth,
[REDACTED]

References and Notes

(1) Metropolitan Water Plan 2006, NSW Government. Exec Summary section of the doc [https://www.dropbox.com/s/pu9898oq6kocrph/NSW Govt 2006 MWP summary.pdf?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/pu9898oq6kocrph/NSW%20Govt%20MWP%20summary.pdf?dl=0) (2) Ainsworth Heritage, Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment, 2011 (3) SMEC Australia, Terrestrial Ecology Impact Assessment, 2011 (4) NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment 2019, 'Delivering the plan', Sydney, viewed 03 August 2020 < <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Plans-for-your-area/Regional-Plans/North-Coast/Delivering-the-plan> > , Direction 2: Enhance biodiversity coastal and aquatic habitats and water catchments. (5) NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment 2019, 'NSW population projections ', Sydney, viewed 03 August 2020, <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Research-and-Demography/Population-projections/Projections> Scroll down to "Local Government Factsheets". (6) Environmental Flows Assessment Proposed Dunoon Dam, 30 Aug 2012, Eco Logical Australia. (7) The Rous Regional Water Efficiency Program 1997, Final report of the Rous Regional Demand Management Strategy : preferred options, Rous County Council, Lismore. (8) Watson R., Turner A and Fane S 2018, Water Efficiency and Demand Management Opportunities for Hunter Water, Institute for Sustainable Futures, Sydney. (9) Stuart White, [2020www.bit.ly/Prof-Stuart-White-Rous-slides](https://www.bit.ly/Prof-Stuart-White-Rous-slides) (10)Kahn,Stuart and Branch, Amos 2019, Potable water reuse: What can Australia learn from global experience?, Water Research Australia Limited, Adelaide. (11)Windhoek Goreangab Operating Company (Pty) Ltd 2020,Our history | Wingoc, Veolia Environment, Windhoek, viewed 3 August 2020, [https://www.wingoc.com.na/\(12\)\\$220](https://www.wingoc.com.na/(12)$220) million dollars - the estimated cost of the new dam - could provide more than 73,000 rainwater tanks (22,700L) at \$3,000 each including installation. That is 1.66GL storage with no evaporation and much increased community resilience for future climate risks. This more than covers the 0.9GL extra water needed by the 12,720 new people predicted to come to our area based on 194L/person/day average water use (Rous). (13)Australian Government Department of Industry 2013, Science, Energy and Resources, Rainwater | Your home, Canberra, viewed 3 August 2020,<https://www.yourhome.gov.au/water/rainwater> (14)Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment 2018, What are the ecological impacts of groundwater drawdown? | Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, Canberra, viewed 6 August 2020, <https://www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/what-are-the-ecological-impacts-of-groundwater-drawdown>