

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: [REDACTED]
To: DPIE W Regional Water Strategies Mailbox
Cc: office@pavey.minister.nsw.gov.au
Subject: Far North Coast Water Strategy

Dear Water Minister,
I'm writing to you about the proposed Dunoon Dam, part of Rous County Council's Future Water Project 2060.

Since the beginning of the public submission process about the proposed Dunoon Dam (DD) I have had time to learn about & think deeply about the proposals & solutions. I oppose the development of the proposed Dunoon Dam for these reasons:

Please allow me to speak plainly, in deep respect.

The terrain is unsuitable for a Dam, I've lived here for over 33 years & I know the land. The geo-mapping looks good on paper only. The upper area reaches of Dunoon Dam (DD) is basalt, (N, NE & East) all good, the lower (S, SW & West) is sandstone. The 'Dunoon Dam' won't hold water because the sandstone is porous, faulty & weak & there are lava tubes running through the Western ridge side of the proposed Dam area & also the Channon Hill, which is the SW region of the Dam wall. The Channon Hill is composed of sand & sandstone outcrops, some floating boulders of mixed origin, with a bulge of exhausted lava underneath & quartzite that is shattered & cracked like a smashed Thermos flask. There's no consistency there, geologically, it's a jumbled mess. There are faults in the Western ridge further upstream too. DD won't hold water without exorbitantly costly & time-consuming human intervention. Approximately half of the area of the DD won't hold water from its "soil" type. It would be an immense waste of time & money to try to make a Dam there. Even if all the holes & faults could be plugged, the sides tarred & concreted, scraped to beyond bedrock & totally de-natured to a mere hollowed slab... There's another major problem: it still has Rocky Creek Dam(RCD) on the watercourse above it. RCD has an earthen embankment wall, (they're infamous & notorious for collapse). There's no ability to adjust the overflow of RCD into the proposed Dam, especially during flood times (remember Cyclone Debbie?) & also simply for environmental flows. Two major dams on the one creek catchment is "putting too many eggs into one basket." If either or both Dams 'fail' & spill out, it means catastrophe for The Channon, Keerrong, Goolmangar, Tuncester & Lismore. Other areas too. A lot of people would die & land would be ruined for generations.

The DD would increase the severity of flooding downstream(3) as well, not good locally, not good for Lismore & further downstream towards Ballina either.

This is our country, these are our creeks, our people, our friends, our villages & Town, our forests & wildlife, our heritage. I love all. I want to protect them.

It's a rare pocket of rugged big scrub habitat(2) that people didn't trouble to ruin & it's resident wildlife - the earthworms, insects, frogs, water mussels, crayfish, platypus, fish, birds, marsupials, reptiles & established, mature forest - will be displaced or dead & gone. "Offset" planting is well-intentioned but doesn't function like mature forest until a lifetime has passed. If you don't believe me, then plant a rainforest tree & see how big it is by the end of your own lifetime & then contemplate that a mature tree can be annihilated with a chainsaw in minutes.

Proposed inundation area has Indigenous sites too. Sacred places are sacred for good cause, legitimate reasons. The previous custodians of this land allowed space to protect water, for animal & plant sanctuaries & conservation, for wildlife breeding sites, Women's private birthing sites, burial places(1), places simply to feel awe about the Dreamtime & renew spiritually, initiation sites, food prep areas (like middens), tool prep areas, meeting & ceremony clearings, camp clearings & so on. These places are as important as a conventional Church or graveyard & are essential to preserve.

It's commonplace housing developments & industry versus this unique place. Flushing toilets & making money versus protecting the shreds of what's left of the real Australia.

There's also the factor of meeting the needs of expansion & growth of development. Both overdeveloping or underdeveloping or overstocking & understocking of land is bad. There is a carrying capacity (4) for healthy management of communities, extra water doesn't change that fact.

I am realistic that Rous Water needs to turn a profit somewhat & that agriculture & industry need water, community needs water security, so some of these are more sustainable than others, remember, sometimes most profitable is not the best option.

The Dam has widespread opposition in this area. 91% of submissions are against this particular Dunoon Dam proposal.

Solutions:

- Installation of Smart Water Systems such as rainwater tanks, recycling & stormwater run-off into new developments from the planning stage.
- Replace & raise Rocky Creek Dam wall to increase safety & capacity. Even a metre or two would be an advantage.
- Raise Toonumbar Dam wall to increase capacity.
- Utilise groundwater at Alstonville Plateau.
- Desalination at Broken Head. What to do about electricity needs? Solar & wind power to supplement energy consumption needs. What about brine? Dilute with sea water & pump out to sea.
- System-wide audit to stop waste.
- Retrofit water saving devices & equipment.
- Stormwater harvesting to supplement & top up groundwater storage &/or recycling system.
- Demand management for the top 100 commercial enterprise water consumers by stepped quota pricing. "Use more, costs more."
- Investigate making some smaller dams, such as Marom Creek & others that suit the LGA's.
- Water recycling where feasible.
- Consider the possibility that there are natural limits to carrying capacity of land & allow some regions to remain less developed than others, that it is alright to accept that some places are adequate & even more pleasant with a sparser population.

Rather than saying: "I pay my respect to Indigenous custodians both past & present etcetera", it is more respectful to actively protect this Valley of Rocky Creek as an environmental asset that can be developed for ecotourism & preserve Indigenous heritage, allow & foster scientific rainforest & wildlife study & preservation, education, mining offset planting or create recreational park, camping & more, the possibilities are amazing.

Please pursue other avenues of water generation & harvesting in the region. The Dunoon Dam is a fail.

References:

- (1) Destruction of important Indigenous cultural heritage, including burial sites (Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment, 2011)(2).
- (2) 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, '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. (4)
- Rous is required to avoid this destruction because there are economically viable and more effective solutions.
- (3) Catastrophic flooding downstream in worst floods, particularly for the first 3 kilometres below. (Environmental Flows Assessment 2011)(6)
- (4) Potential to drive unneeded population growth, as the government attempts to gain value from this unnecessary & expensive big dam water scheme.

Thank you for reading my submission, I thought carefully to speak the truth, I hope you all will find excellent water source alternatives & reject the DD.

Yours faithfully,
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