

Submission to Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
Re: Far North Coast Water Strategy

My name is [REDACTED] and I have lived in the area impacted by Rous County Council's proposed Water Strategy since 1981. I am an academic and have worked at Southern Cross University in Lismore for 25 years. Like many of the residents in The Channon/Dunoon area, I love having world heritage rainforest in The Channon Gorge on my doorstep, knowing that so many endangered species such as koalas and platypus are protected by it and that it supports a precious ecology, contributing a significant portion of the 1% of the ancient Big Scrub that still remains.

I appreciate that the DPIE has put much thought and drawn on a lot of expertise in developing the FNC Water Strategy, which acknowledges the need to ensure a reliable water supply into the future. This is so important. However, I am very concerned that Rous Council's Future Water 2060 project is woefully inadequate as it relies almost exclusively on the construction of the 'Dunoon Dam' which would flood The Channon Gorge. This project is strongly opposed by the community (91% of 1290 submissions to Rous were against the dam). Importantly, experts from the Institute for Sustainable Futures at UTS, the University of NSW and Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA) all argue for a mix of complementary strategies, particularly water efficiency and demand management for a resilient water future. WSAA in particular has stressed that dams in the future are expensive and likely to become stranded assets given they are rainfall dependent¹. They are relics of the past. We need 21st century thinking to solve the critical issue of water resilience.

My top priority concerns about the proposed Strategy, among the many that have been expressed by the local community and water experts, are:

- The destruction of cultural heritage if the proposed dam goes ahead – Elders I know personally have consistently opposed any interference with sacred burial sites in The Channon Gorge. Surely the recent Juukan Gorge disaster has to be uppermost in our minds at this time?
- The destruction of irreplaceable rainforest and threatened species – for example, Whian Whian Landcare has planted almost 3000 koala food trees to rebuild corridors in the proposed dam area, which would be destroyed if the plans for the dam were implemented.
- The lack of foresight in the strategy about water options in a climate-threatened future – what is needed is a range of options that are not rainfall dependent.
- The lack of genuine community consultation given what is at stake, not only for our community and the traditional custodians, but the broader region. Rous's attempts at consultation have been opaque and tokenistic at best.

I request that you please take the unpopular, risky and destructive Dunoon Dam off the table as part of the FNC Water Strategy. We are an informed and determined community and will continue to express our opposition by all means available to us.

¹ Water Services Association of Australia (2020). All Options on The Table: Urban Water Supply Options for Australia