



The voice for the environment since 1955

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Committee Secretary
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Email: rrat.sen@aph.gov.au

Re: Inquiry Additional Water Supplies for South East Queensland

Dear Committee Secretary,

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW (NCC) would like to put a submission in to the inquiry on additional water supplies for South East Queensland. We believe that sustainable options are being overlooked in many of the proposals and strongly object to transfers of water from catchments in northern New South Wales.

NCC believes that a sustainable solution to urban water management in South East Queensland lies in a mix of responses that includes significantly improved demand management to conserve the use of water, vastly increased rainwater harvesting including the widespread use of household rainwater tanks, and the increased use of recycling in new and existing developments. Research by NCC shows that a mixture of demand management measures and the uptake of rainwater tanks to 5% of households in South East Queensland each year would be able to significantly defer the need for supply augmentation in South East Queensland.

We would like to express our opposition to the proposals that were outlined in a National Water Commission report for water supply options in northern NSW. This included a range of proposals that involved dams and/or pipes from the Tweed and Clarence River catchments. The report outlined some preferred options that would be constructed on the Clarence River or its tributaries that we would like to specifically comment on.

The proposal to construct dams and/or pipelines near Duck Creek or on the Mann River near Jackadgery would have unacceptable impacts on the environment of the Clarence River. These options would have enormous

consequences on local ecosystems, causing irreparable damage to the area.

Additionally:

- The construction of dams would create a huge barrier to the movement of biodiversity. This would impact on a range of species such as the Eastern Cod (*Maccullochella ikei*), which is listed as endangered under both Commonwealth and State legislation. The strongest populations are found around one of the dam proposals near Jackadgery. A dam would be devastating for this remnant population and would be likely to cause its extinction.
- The construction of dams will cause the inundation of large areas and drown many existing ecosystems. A dam at or upstream of Jackadgery would inundate Nymboida National Park, while the Yabbra National Park and State Forest would be affected if a dam is built at Duck Creek or Tooloom Creek. This impact is unacceptable for National Parks that contain diverse ranges of flora and fauna and need to be protected.
- The dam/pipeline proposals will significantly reduce and alter environmental flows. These environmental flows are vital for the lower Clarence which has an abundance of marine and riparian life. They will result in altering the salinity of the river, causing erosion and further adjusting natural cycles resulting in lower fish numbers. The lower Clarence has large areas of tidal mangroves which require flood incidences to provide habitat and sanctuary for a range of invertebrates and fish life. These flood incidences will be severely curtailed if large dams are constructed.
- The construction of a proposed dam, pipelines to Queensland and transmission lines will result in the extensive clearing of areas of bushland, further reducing terrestrial biodiversity.
- The delivery of water to Queensland will require significant amounts of electricity. This will result in large greenhouse gas emissions which have not been factored into the proposal.

Our review of the report also shows there are many deficiencies that would indicate the dam/pipeline proposals are unviable both in terms of water yield and financial feasibility.

- The flow yields and rainfall averages used by the Snowy Mountains Electricity Commission (SMEC) do not show that rainfall in the past decade has been less than half that of the long term average at some of the proposed sites.
- The SMEC data does not consider the impacts of climate change in altering and reducing rainfall and runoff. Relying on long term historical data will not incorporate the recent significant declines in rainfall that would make new dams in this area unviable.
- The report appears to be unaware of, or has not correctly determined the impact of other water extractions that occur on the Clarence River such as at the Mann or Nymboida River. Further extractions would greatly reduce downstream flows and result in further environmental impacts as previously discussed.

We ask the Senate Committee to strongly consider the sustainable water management options that are available when looking at supply options. The vastly increased use of rainwater tanks, widespread recycling and increased water conservation are cost effective methods to sustainably use our water

supply. These options are able to be implemented without the widespread environmental damage that a new dam would cause on our already pressured ecosystems.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cate Faehrmann', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cate Faehrmann
Executive Director