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The Secretary  
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Secretary

### **Submission on Inquiry into Water Supplies for South East Queensland**

Please note that this submission has been prepared within a limited timeframe due to inadequate advertising of the submission process.

I was only made aware of opportunity to provide submissions after reading an article in the *Daily Examiner* on 9 May 2007. I believe that there has not been an equal or adequate opportunity to provide submissions, particularly for the community in the Clarence River catchment. The recommendations made by the Committee will therefore be based on a lack of consideration of views in relation to the options for the Clarence River and its tributaries. I expect that this issue will be addressed by the Committee in order to ensure a fair process and to demonstrate to the public that the submissions process is genuine.

I understand that the Committee will consider the merits of all supply options including those relating to the Clarence River outlined in the recent report commissioned by the National Water Commission entitled *Integrated Water Supply Options for North East New South Wales and South East Queensland* (the Report). Four of the five options identified in the report relate to the Clarence River or tributaries:

- Dam on **Clarence River** upstream of Duck Creek (pipeline to Logan River)
- Dam on **Toooloom Creek** (pipeline/tunnel to Logan River)
- Weir on **Mann River** (pipeline to Logan River)
- Dam on **Mann River** (pipeline to Logan River )

I suggest that the Report cannot be used as a sound basis for considering supply options. Section 7 of the Report states that “the options presented in this report were developed after a comprehensive review of available information on population, demand, hydrology, environmental factors and social issues.” However, it is clear that the options were recommended from only a “desk-top” review and without adequate consideration of environmental, social and economic impacts. In addition, the Report did not appear to consider the impacts of climate change. The options therefore cannot be described as “viable options” as stated in the Report. The recommendations were also arrived at without any public consultation.

I object to options outlined in the Report as they would result in adverse environmental, social and economic impacts. I further object to the building of dams or weirs on the

Clarence River or its tributaries in order to facilitate unsustainable growth in south east Queensland. Planning for development needs to consider environmental constraints (including water) in order to ensure that it does not exceed the carrying capacity of the environment. I note that both the Report and the terms of reference for this Inquiry fail to address this fundamental issue.

The Clarence River and its tributaries are of environmental significance. The options will result in the inundation of large areas which will impact on ecosystems and biodiversity. Clearing of vegetation and habitat for construction and access will also impact upon biodiversity. The Report notes that the options will have a range of impacts on national parks, biodiversity and wild/scenic rivers. For example, Table 4.7 of the Report notes that for the Clarence River option, there would be inundation of significant areas in National Parks, significant intrusion into National Parks for access and construction, and biodiversity issues. Table 4.7 of the Report notes that for the Mann River option, there would be inundation of 40km of Mann and Nymboida Rivers regarded as likely wild and scenic.

A dam or weir on the Clarence River or its tributaries would impact on the natural environmental flows (including high flows) which are crucial for ecosystems function and maintenance of biodiversity. The options would also have an adverse impact on biodiversity due to the restriction of passage. For example, the Mann River options would impact on the already threatened eastern freshwater cod. The proposals will result in water quality, salinity and erosion issues. The options for the Clarence River and its tributaries will also exacerbate the impacts of climate change.

The Clarence River catchment supports significant industries such as agriculture (primarily grazing and sugar cane), fishing, shipping, and tourism. Table 4.7 of the Report states that the resumption of farmlands would be required for the Tooloom Creek option, which would result in adverse economic impacts on the agriculture industry. A dam or weir on the Clarence River or its tributaries would adversely impact on the economy of local industries, which would have flow on social effects.

The Clarence River and its tributaries are of significance to the local Aboriginal community, including the Bundjalung, Yaegl and Gumbayngirr people. There are at least six communities in the area including Grafton, Maclean, Yamba, Baryulgil, Mulabugilmah and Tabulam. There is an active Native Title Claim on the waters of the Clarence River. Ulgundahi Island, within the Clarence River, is registered on the State Heritage Register under the NSW *Heritage Act* due to the significance of the island and its surrounding waters. A dam or weir on the Clarence River or its tributaries would adversely impact on the local Aboriginal community.

The Clarence River and its tributaries have heritage significance. Susan Island is registered on the Register of National Estate. The Lower Clarence River Area, Southern Clarence River Tributaries Catchments, Paddy's Flat Area (adjacent to the Clarence River near Tooloom) and Wooloweyah Lagoon are currently being assessed for inclusion

on the Register of National Estate. A dam or weir on the Clarence River or its tributaries would adversely impact on heritage values.

The Clarence River and its tributaries are of social significance and contribute to community well being due to the above outlined environmental and economic significance, but also due to historical, cultural, recreational, and educational significance. A dam or weir on the Clarence River or its tributaries would have major adverse impacts on the community.

Finally, I would like to emphasise that it is unacceptable for the Clarence River catchment and its community to bear the burden of continued unsustainable development in south east Queensland.

Yours sincerely

Justine Maunsell  
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8 June 2007