

7 December 2022

Planning NSW

Dear Mesdames and Sirs

This is a Submission in objection to the project Ref No SSI-10046

The TRRRA is a non-profit association whose charter is to represent to Tamworth Regional Council (TRC) and other government bodies on behalf of TRC residents on matters that affect their interests by any person, organisation or government body.

The below comments are made as a matter of public interest to assist Tamworth Regional Council in its decision making.

The proposed Dungowan Dam in the Peel River catchment is estimated to cost \$1.3 billion to provide only an average of an additional 7,000 ML per year and will not secure Tamworth water supply into the future. This water would cost an estimated \$70,000 per ML while much cheaper alternatives are available. The proposal to build the Dungowan Dam is constrained by the terms of references set by the State and Federal Governments.

There are two major criticisms of the proposal for Dungowan Dam:

First, the Federal Government has announced on 25 October in the Budget that funding will be deferred for four years, saving \$900 million on the budget over that four year period. There is no current funding for the Dam and it seems unlikely to emerge in the foreseeable future

Second, the water sharing plan, whether a new Dungowan Dam is built or not, would ideally include a section or clause, giving power to Tamworth Regional Council to require immediate arbitration, or mediation, with recourse to the Land and Environment Court and appeal from the Land and Environment Court to the Supreme Court of NSW if there was failure to agree between Water NSW and/or its successors and or the Minister for Water and or their successors, if Tamworth Regional Council determined that releases were excessive. That section or clause should also require that all releases from Chaffey Dam and/or Dungowan Dam shall cease except for the minimum environmental flows and the Tamworth water supply during the continuance of arbitration, mediation or appeal to the Courts. A repetition of the management of Chaffey Dam that occurred between 2017 and 2020 in the Peel Valley cannot be countenanced.

We regard the EIS as being competently prepared by the Water NSW personnel within the terms of reference that they were provide with, but however make the following points:

1. The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) fails to comply with the Secretary of Planning assessment requirements (SEARs).

The EIS does not:

- ☐ analyse and optimise alternatives;
- ☐ assess all threatened species including those listed under Federal law;
- ☐ provide all assumptions used in modelling.

2. The project will not meet its objective to provide the most cost effective or efficient option for securing Tamworth water supply:

- ☐ There is no analysis of the benefits of the proposed Tamworth Regional Council industrial water recycling project;
- ☐ The EIS fails to identify industrial use of town water supply. In Tamworth up to 50% of potable water supply is used by three large meat processing plants;
- ☐ Options analysis was constrained by terms of reference developed in 2015 and does not reflect current best practice;
- ☐ Limited options were analysed in the summary business case.

3. River health impacts:

- ☐ Loss of 192 km² of high quality native fish habitat and loss of migration opportunities for Federally listed threatened Murray Cod, Silver Perch and Eel-tailed Catfish;
- ☐ Dungowan Creek is within the threatened Lowland Darling River aquatic ecological community. Offset measures for impacts on threatened native fish are not adequate;
- ☐ Dungowan Creek and Peel River have a healthy Platypus population that will be genetically separated;
- ☐ The loss of flows in the Peel River will cause a failure to meet the Environmental Water Requirements of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and impact on environmental health of the Namoi River catchment.

4. Biodiversity impacts:

- ☐ A significant area of critically endangered ecosystem and Koala habitat will be cleared, including habitat for many other endangered mammal and bird species
- ☐ The EIS fails to assess 18 threatened species known or likely to be in the area of impact including 6 threatened species protected under Federal law such as the Greater Glider and 2 critically endangered plants.

5. Aboriginal cultural heritage impacts

- ☐ Many sites of high cultural significance will be impacted;
- ☐ Many sites require further research and not all of the pipeline easement was assessed;
- ☐ There are no cultural flow allocations in Dungowan Creek or the Peel River.

6. Cost impacts

- ☐ The political promise that all construction costs will be granted does not meet current user pays policy for new water infrastructure in NSW and increased water costs will be imposed by IPART;
- ☐ Taxpayers of NSW do not want to pay for a project with no cost benefit and significant environmental damage;
- ☐ The Federal Productivity Commission deemed the project poor value.

7. Social impacts

- ☐ The required workforce will compete with other industries and intensify labour shortages;
- ☐ Regional infrastructure spending to fix flood damaged roads should be prioritised;
- ☐ Local jobs were not generated by Stage 1 pipeline project – it was constructed by FIFO workers;
- ☐ Local concerns raised about loss of river flows and fish populations;
- ☐ Loss of cultural connections and place.

Yours sincerely,

Tamworth Regional Residents and Ratepayers Association

Cc: Russell Webb
Mark Rodda
Helen Tickle
Judy Coates
Brooke Southwell

Phil Betts
Marc Sutherland
Stephen Meares
Bede Burke
Paul Bennett