

NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI)

13 February 2024

Dear Sir / Madam,

I write a submission in support of the proposed permanent Belmont Desalination Plant and request that Hunter Water make a community contribution to the East Lake Macquarie area by upgrading the Black Neds Bay Walking track as part of the project.

It is important that Lake Macquarie play our role in contributing and supporting the Hunter Region in providing a permanent water solution capable of providing 30 million litres of drinking water per day, or approximately 15% of the Hunter Region's average daily water needs. I understand the cost estimate to construct the proposed desalination plant is approximately \$530 million. A capital investment this significant would normally attract a substantial development contribution for the benefit of the East Lake Macquarie community if this proposal was a private investment.

The Black Neds Bay Walking track is identified as an important active recreation link within Lake Macquarie City Council's (LMCC) Walking, Cycling and Better Streets Strategy. An upgrade by Hunter Water to improve accessibility and ensure the track continues to serve the East Lake Macquarie community would promote active recreation and be well received by the city. Black Neds Bay Walking Track is approximately 850 metres in length and commences at Ross Street, Swansea and allows walkers to enjoy the rainforest and natural environment before finishing at the Salts Bay access road and car park which LMCC sealed and upgraded in 2022.

The trail follows an abandoned Hunter Water sewer pipeline, and there is a strong ongoing connection between Hunter Water's operations and the trail. An investment from Hunter Water in improving the Black Neds Walking Track would be welcomed by many in the East Lake Macquarie community.

LMCC has received grants to enhance the protection of the rainforest in this location and construct fit for purpose fencing given the sensitive nature of the environment.

Acknowledging that major infrastructure like Hunter Water's proposed desalination plant does come with some community impacts, I believe that it is important that Hunter Water provide a community benefit alongside the delivery of the plant. I request that this assistance be included as a condition of consent in the modified planning approval.

I encourage Hunter Water to make a long-lasting community contribution that will benefit East Lake Macquarie through upgrading the Black Neds Bay Walking track as part of the Belmont Desalination Plant project. A letter of support from Mr David Hughes, the Director of Built and Natural Assets at LMCC is attached to this submission.

Kind regards,

Cr Adam Shultz

LMCC Councillor – East Ward

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Councillor



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CC: Darren Cleary, Managing Director, Hunter Water Corporation