

Christa Schwoebel

12 October 2024

To the
Commissioners and Executive Director
Natural Resources Commission
NSW Government
nrc@nrc.nsw.gov.au

Submission re Water Sharing Plans for the Unregulated Macleay River and its sub-catchments

Dear Sir/Madam,

As resident of the town of Kempsey on the Macleay River, I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the review of the *Water Sharing Plan for the Macleay Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2016*.

My concerns about the impact of recent developments on the flow of the river are based on my observations and cannot answer all of the general key questions posed on the *nrc* website.

Only recently, I become aware of the opportunity to “have my say”, therefore my submission is brief and my points are mainly addressing Question 6, *What changes do you think are needed to the water sharing plan to improve outcomes?*

My overall concern relates to the lack of consideration given to the downstream environment and water users in the 2016 Water Sharing Plan.

Particular developments since 2016 impacting downstream on the Macleay River are:

Oaky and Malpas Dams

Armidale Regional Council's (ARC) “ambitious employment and population growth targets” require as vital components the purchase and restoration of the Oaky Dam and the raising of the Malpas Dam wall “to secure the region’s water supply”.¹

Water intensive horticulture in the Armidale region

ARC's growth strategy also includes support for the expansion of horticultural crops with increased irrigation demands.²

Oven Mountain Pumped Hydro Storage Scheme

According to the EIS presented by the proponents of the scheme, the “water take for the initial storage fill (6,500 megalitres (ML)) represents 1% of the average annual streamflow volume in the Macleay River adjacent to the Project area. Extraction for the initial storage fill and operational top-up will occur at a rate of up to 86.4 megalitres per day (ML/day) which results in a maximum streamflow reduction of 12.6% for short periods (several hours), equivalent to an approximate 5% reduction in streamflow depth at the extraction point. The initial storage fill is a one-off take and will occur for a relatively short period of time (i.e. 3–12 months) while the periodic operational top-up is predicted to occur infrequently.”³

Questions need to be asked about the accuracy of the streamflow data, pumping times and top-up needs. Granting of this new river access licence and downstream impacts need to be addressed.

Thanking you for accepting and considering “my say”.



Christa Schwoebel

¹ <https://www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au/news/news-2024/oaky-river-dam-purchase-complete>

² <https://www.investarmidale.com.au/costa-group-guyra-tomato-farm-growth-great-for-the-region>

³ Oven Mountain Pumped Hydro Energy Storage EIS.pdf