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Regional Water Strategies
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
Locked Bag 5022
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To whom it may concern,

Re: Lachlan Regional Water Strategy Consultation - September 2020

Lachlan Shire Council would like to thank the Department of Primary Industry and Environment, Water (DPIE) for the opportunity to provide comment on the draft Lachlan Regional Water Strategy during the consultation period and for the opportunities to participate in the on line and face-to-face presentation in Lake Cargelligo.

Council notes the detailed submission provided by the Central New South Wales Joint Organisation (CNSWJO) on behalf of member Council's and I confirm that Lachlan Shire Council supports and endorses that submission. In addition to the information and comments provided in the CNSWJO submission, Lachlan Shire Council submits the following additional responses for your consideration:

1) Wyangala Dam Raising Project (option 2)

Council supports the raising of the Wyangala Dam wall for the purpose of improving water security in the Lachlan Valley. Council encourages the fast tracking and early commencement of this project due the criticality of water availability for Lachlan Valley communities. This is particularly important given the scientific predictions of less frequent yet more intense weather events with shorter time periods between droughts.

2) Expansion of the piped town water supply system (Option 4A)

Council cautiously supports the expansion of a piped town water supply system from Bogan Gate to Condobolin. It is assumed that this would be a raw water supply only and water treatment would still occur in the respective towns and villages.

The experience of the Tottenham and Albert communities, who receive water from the B-Section pipeline, is that the communities at the end of such infrastructure are not as well serviced as communities nearer the water source and can be adversely impacted in terms of reliability in periods of high water demand. This problem can be compounded where a pipeline extends across several local government boundaries and the decisions and policies of one Council impact on the "down the pipe" users in

another LGA. For this reason it is important to have a well-developed and consistent agreement dealing with drought, demand and water restriction policies to guarantee supply.

3) Replacement and upgrade of existing pipelines (option 5A)

The replacement and upgrade of pipelines and other water infrastructure discussed in this option is critical to the water security of the towns and villages. While the option correctly notes that the responsibility for asset replacement is the asset owner, this is not always practical for small rural Councils. Recognition must be given for the economic contribution of rural areas to state revenue. While the revenue is mostly generated by agriculture, it is the small towns and villages that support the agriculture industry.

Many of these small rural communities have relatively low socio-economic populations with a higher percentage of indigenous residents. In order to provide treated water to these communities, extensive reticulation networks are required for relative few connections. Therefore, the cost per connection is much higher in small towns and villages than it is in larger population centres. For this reason water charges are often high and usually only just cover the operational cost of producing treated water, without building sufficient revenue reserves for asset replacement.

Without recognition that the "user pays" principle does not work in small rural councils/communities, and that the state economic benefit produced by these areas justifies state subsidisation for infrastructure, we will likely experience ongoing population decline as residents leave these centres to access basic services. This results in the further loss of services in rural towns, e.g. medical, education, policing, sporting and entertainment which further reduces the liveability of the areas in general.

4) Reuse, recycle and stormwater projects (option 9)

Council supports the proposal for increased water reuse, recycling and stormwater projects to reduce demand for raw and treated water; while maintaining, or enhancing, the green spaces in our communities.

5) Improvement to the storage effectiveness of Lake Cargelligo (option 27)

Lake Cargelligo is not just a water storage facility. For the residents of Lake Cargelligo and Lachlan Shire it supports a growing tourist industry which includes recreational fishing, boating and birdwatching. It is anticipated that the separation of the Lake into 3 small water bodies will adversely impact on these other activities which provide an important economic benefit to Lake Cargelligo and Lachlan Shire.

Further Lake Cargelligo is home to a vast number of native birds. The impact of separating the Lake could adversely impact on this habitat and generate undesirable environmental outcomes.

This option requires significant further investigation including extensive community consultation and it is likely to be strongly opposed by the Lachlan Shire community.

6) The “Sheet of Water” storage and Curlew Water (option 31)

“Sheet of Water” and Curlew Water are natural water bodies that support significant aquatic and bird communities. By removing these water bodies from the river system there is likely to be detrimental environment outcomes and it is anticipated that this option will be strongly opposed by the Lachlan Shire community because of these broader negative outcomes.

7) Gum Bend Lake Water allocation (option 38)

Gum Bend Lake is a man-made off stream water body close to Condobolin that was constructed in 1988 with contributions from Federal, State and Local Government. Initially the Lake was filled, and the water level maintained, by access to high river flows. With the introduction of water allocations, Lachlan Shire obtained a General Security Water Licence allocation to fill the Lake.

The Lake attracts a large number of visitors to Condobolin in spring, summer and autumn with water-sports and birdwatching being the primary activities. The freedom camping area adjacent to the Lake is also very popular and often attracts as many as 25 to 30 campers per night during the peak season. This generates significant economic benefit for Condobolin as well as providing beneficial respite for local residents and farmers during the hot dry summer period.

During periods of drought, when General Water security allocations are reduced or cancelled, the Lake cannot be filled. This has a negative impact on the town and the community in general. The solution would be for Council to purchase a High Security Water Licence; however, with an allocation of 800 megalitres required, and current permanent high security water costing around \$4,500/megalitre, this cost is beyond the community’s capacity.

An alternate solution would be for the economic value of this facility to be recognised and an alternate water allocation set aside for the Lake when General Security water is not available. This allocation could be called “Community Water” and made in addition to Town Water allocations.

Should you wish to discuss this submission further I can be contacted on 

Yours faithfully,

