

enquiries refer
Klaus Kerzinger
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30 November 2018

NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer

(Via email: water.review@chiefscientist.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Sir

Independent Review of the Impacts of the Bottled Water Industry on the Groundwater Resources in the Northern Rivers Region of NSW.

The purpose of this letter is to provide the Chief Scientist and Engineer with information relating to the issues that the Council has identified as potentially being relevant to your enquiry. These issues, as highlighted in a letter to the Hon Niall Blair MLC, Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister Trade and Industry, in correspondence from the Mayor of Ballina Shire to the Minister, dated 27 November 2018, are as follows:

- The capacity of the Alstonville aquifer to sustain water harvesting for non-agricultural purposes in the longer term and also having regard to predicted climatic changes;
- The potential impacts, including appropriateness, of allocating ground water for non-agriculture purposes within an area designated as State Significant Farmland;
- The potential impacts of ground water harvesting for non-agricultural purposes on stream flow rates and associated potential biodiversity impacts;
- The sustainability of ground water harvesting for the bottled water industry having regard to issues such as waste generation;
- The adequacy of the current ground water extraction licencing regime to control the transfer of water allocations from agricultural to non-agricultural purposes;
- Social equity issues associated with the sale of a public resource (water) for a minimal price and the lack of financial or other benefits for local communities impacted by water harvesting; and
- The lack of a clear planning framework, including State based guidelines, to regulate the extraction of ground water for the bottled water industry.

Since the above issues were identified and directed to the Minister for consideration in your review an additional, and potentially more serious issue has arisen. That issue relates to the question of whether the water contained within the aquifer is suitable as a source of drinking water having regard to its potential to be contaminated by agricultural chemicals?

Attached for your information is a news report which appeared in the Ballina Shire Advocate on 28 November 2018 .This report relates to the sudden death of bees on the Alstonville Plateau being attributed to the use of agricultural chemicals. The Alstonville Plateau is located within a large area of State and Regionally Significant Farmland utilised for intensive agricultural purposes. These agricultural uses rely on pesticides and other chemical agents to sustain high yield production. Given the ongoing significant expansion of agricultural activities on the Alstonville Plateau the question arises as to whether both ground and surface water resources have been impacted by such chemical uses.

Council last undertook a study which examined pesticide chemical residue in the Marom Creek catchment in 2008 and is not aware of any similar more recent study.

Should your Department require further information in respect to the issues raised in this letter then please contact Leah Toole, telephone 6686 1454 or email leah.toole@ballina.nsw.gov.au. Council looks forward to your response in due course.

Yours faithfully



Klaus Kerzinger
Acting Manager Strategic Planning