MITCHELL RIVER WATERSHED MANAGEMENT GROUP INC

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Dr Patrick Huber, Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water

Dear Patrick,

Re: Community feedback for Tablelands Water Assessment

Thank you for your support of the Regional Water Security Forum we hosted in Dimbulah, 26 May 2022. We're sorry you were not able to attend due to unexpected health issues and are pleased with your full recovery.

Attendees agreed to participate in a brief brainstorming session with the aim of providing you with a number of priority issues for consideration in the Tablelands Water Assessment process.

On the page following, we offer these comments for your consideration.

Kind regards,

John Brisbin, Secretary

Attendee Priorities for the Tablelands Regional Water Assessment

Biosecurity

The risks from cross-catchment should always be considered. The Barron and Mitchell catchments are very closely joined and should be managed as a single system.

Noting the existing issues of tilapia from Tinaroo dam now invading the Walsh, and the risk of Amazon Frogbit being carried from the Barron to the Mitchell.

Responsibility for the riverine systems is complicated, making a coordinated response difficult. The current policy toward biosecurity isn't appropriate because individual land managers, including Council and Parks, often do not have the resources (or mandate) to work cooperatively to control biosecurity problems.

Limits to growth

Current policy support economic growth and an expanding population for the region. But this challenges the necessity of operating within ecological limits.

Data and efficiency

There is a lack of data around irrigation systems and water re-use. If the resource is to be managed better, and for the benefit of all water users, then there needs to be a much higher emphasis on data collection. This should be compulsory and should be part of a public data process so there's transparency around planning decisions and market options.

Negative consequences of competition

The competitive approach to water access leads to negative outcomes for downstream users. Needs better planned usage with releases, timed irrigation, and considerations for crop requirements or on-farm water storage.

Water trading

There are serious objections to setting up a market that allows water speculation. Splitting water allocations from the land is seen to encourage speculation and profiteering.

Inequality in water pricing

Recreational and environmental water is released at far lower costs than to commercial producers. This is seen as inequitable.

Future needs

Power and water are tightly joined: increase in water usage means an increase in power demand. Demand profile of high priority crops needs to be modeled along with the potential impacts of other (non-ag) industries. Climate variability must be factored in. Rain will be more highly insecure: dams don't bring rain!