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November 16, 2019

The Hon. Melinda Pavey MP  
Minister for Water, Property and Housing  
GPO Box 5341  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Minister

On Friday November 15, the Tweed Water Alliance convened a meeting of the Mayors of the Tweed and Ballina Shires, the State members for Lismore and Ballina, our legal representatives as well as key members of the Tweed Water Alliance.

Our task was to look at ways we could, in a broadly based initiative, look at legislative and regulatory reform to preserve our groundwater whilst equitably ensuring its use for productive, sustainable industry.

A crucial first step is to stop water extraction for the bottling industry in its tracks while we are in drought.

As Minister you have extensive powers under the legislation:

*Temporary water restriction – section 324*

Section 324 of the Water Management Act 2000 (the Act) allows the Minister or her delegate to order that temporary water restrictions within a water source(s) are to have effect for a specified period, if these restrictions are determined to be in the public interest.

Section 43 (2) of the Interpretation Act 1987 provides that the power to make an order under an Act includes the power to repeal the order.

Our surface water is running dry, our shire is on fire. Firefighters are relying on dwindling surface water with little or no standing water left and houses are running out of supply for domestic use, let alone the huge amount needed to fight a fire.

Groundwater is inextricably linked to surface water. The NSW Office of Water holds this as one of its key operating tenets. Yet the water bottlers have somehow hoodwinked the development application assessors by saying, based on flimsy desktop studies, that it isn't. Tweed Shire Council officers somehow accepted them and we are left with the current state of affairs.

The Tweed Water Alliance is issuing a media release as soon as possible calling on you to stop water extraction for the bottled water industry in the Tweed Shire (and others as the Minister pleases) in the interests of preserving groundwater. To be fair we invite you to use your powers to resolve the current situation before we make the public call.

We look forward to your positive response, Minister.

Yours sincerely  
Pat Miller  
Committee member, Tweed Water Alliance.