



P.O. Box 3287 Uki NSW 2484  
[tweedwateralliance@gmail.com](mailto:tweedwateralliance@gmail.com)  
[www.tweedwateralliance.org.au](http://www.tweedwateralliance.org.au)

## An open letter to the Tweed Shire Council and the NSW Chief Scientist

Dear Professor Durrant-Whyte and Tweed Shire Councillors

Our community was shocked and deeply disappointed by your office's correspondence on Thursday, 5 March 2020 at 5.05pm that seemed to attempt to interfere with and influence the Tweed Shire Council in its vote on the Tweed Shire Council Planning Proposal PP18/0004 to Remove Enabling Clause 7.1 Water Bottling Facilities from the Tweed Local Environmental Plan 2014.

Deputy Chief Scientist Dr Chris Armstrong submitted a 5-page letter by email minutes before Council was due to vote on the removal of the clause. In this letter, he meticulously commented on details of Council's Planning Proposal PP18/0004, raised questions, lectured on scientific principles, sought clarifications and expressed his concerns on a number of points.

In our view the Deputy Chief Scientist directly sought to influence a decision of a local government body for political reasons and well outside the stated purview of the OSCE.

The final report of your *Independent Review of the impacts of the bottled water industry on groundwater resources in the Northern Rivers region* (the Review) was published on 31 October 2019. A group of representatives of your office, led by Dr Armstrong, then met with Council and other stakeholders, including ourselves, to discuss, explain and clarify outcomes of the Review on 16/17 February 2020. As expressed by Dr Armstrong at that time, these meetings concluded your office's involvement in this matter as per the Terms of Reference.

The final Review was produced. How many times does the Deputy Chief Scientist have to clarify it? Why would he seek to protect it from "misinterpretation" with verbose, sciency goobledygook?

The report clearly concluded that commercial water extraction facilities in Northern NSW were formerly approved:

- without taking into account the severe effects of climate change;
- with a too simplistic view and no understanding of local conditions;
- based on an extensive lack of data and monitoring measures;
- neglecting current best practice methods,
- within a legal framework full of gaps and unclear responsibilities,
- without scrutinising their impact on environment and the community,

We do not accept what we see as an attempt to undermine the Tweed Shire Council's decision.

The item will be voted on by council this Thursday March 19 with a clear recommendation from council staff that it be passed and with a clear statement, in spite of the bluster by Dr Armstrong, that the matter is for the council alone to decide. This was supported by NSWWater and the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

Council staff did not misinterpret the review. It concluded there was not enough data and the uncertainty principle - if you don't know don't do it - is further supported by the fact that the industry has no economic, social or community benefit to the shire.

We expect Tweed Shire Council Planning Proposal PP18/0004 to Remove Enabling Clause 7.1 Water Bottling Facilities from the Tweed Local Environmental Plan 2014 to be passed by a unanimous vote of Councillors.

Yours sincerely

XXXXXXXX  
XXXXXXXX  
XXXXXXXX

Pat Miller  
On behalf of the Tweed Water Alliance and 99% of the community

