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Media Release

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Townsville back-up water supply to be tapped for miners

A proposal to redirect water from northern rivers to supply the Galilee Basin mining and coal-fired power projects stands to threaten Townsville's back-up water supply, according to North Queensland Conservation Council Coordinator Wendy Tubman.

'Galilee Water P/L has applied under Federal legislation to divert up to 214,000 megalitres of water each year from the Campaspe and Cape rivers and store it in two 600,000 megalitre deep cell systems to be piped for use predominantly by coal miners in the Galilee Basin. According to Galilee Water's sparse website the project 'will create a positive legacy for the region following completion of coal mining', Ms Tubman said.

'A second stage of the project would see similar diversions from the Belyando River.

'All three rivers flow into the Burdekin River and the Burdekin dam provides back-up water supplies to Townsville during droughts. Current remaining water allocations from the dam are insufficient to supply Galilee Water.

'Galilee Water's website states: 'Large users of bulk water will require extreme storage to withstand drought in the Galilee Basin. Only Galilee Water can provide the water security needed to protect billions of dollars of coal mine investment and substantially more investment by customers who are banking on reliable coal supply over decades.

'In a mockery of the federal EPBC assessment process the proponent states that the project is not related to other actions or proposals in the region. This is despite the fact that the water diversion project is being done in order to provide water to the mega coal mines proposed for the Galilee Basin' said Ms Tubman.

'By distancing itself from large coal mining, the project avoids a new category of protection in the EPBC system, the so-called 'water trigger'. This requires coal seam gas and large coal mining developments to be assessed by an Independent Expert Scientific Committee.

'Prior to submitting its referral, Galilee Water spoke with Charters Towers Council, but not Townsville City Council.

'NQCC calls on whichever government is in power in Queensland after the Saturday election to call for the most rigorous level of assessment, including the potential impact on Townsville's water supply', Ms Tubman said.

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