

Regional Water Strategies Public Exhibition Submission Questionnaire

The NSW Government is taking action to improve the security, reliability, quality and resilience of the state's water resources. The Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy will deliver healthy and resilient water resources for a liveable and prosperous regional NSW.

This draft strategy is being developed by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and provides an opportunity to re-shape what we are doing in regional water management and chart a path forward.

We have been working with local water utilities, councils, communities, Aboriginal people and other stakeholders to ensure local and traditional knowledge informs the draft Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy and that it serves the regional community, including First Nations, the environment and industry.

Your Voice is important

We have prepared this draft strategy to continue our discussions with you. We would like to hear your views on the draft strategy as a whole including the process we used to develop the strategy and the evidence that supports it. We are also seeking your feedback on the options presented in the draft strategy and whether you have any further information that could help us to assess the benefits and disadvantages of any of the options.

Please provide your feedback in the submission form below and email your completed submission to regionalwater.strategies@dpie.nsw.gov.au or post to Regional Water Strategies, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124 by **13 November, 2020**.

The questionnaire includes general questions about the regional water strategy including objectives, vision, modelling, opportunities and challenges. It also includes questions regarding the draft options along with personal information questions.

The questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete and your response can remain anonymous if you wish (see question 3).

Questions marked with an asterisk (*) require an answer.

If you have any questions about the questionnaire, please email:
regionalwater.strategies@dpie.nsw.gov.au

Making your submission public

We collect information about you, which may include personal information, to assess submissions in response to the department's dealings and activities, and perform other functions required to complete the project. This information must be supplied. If you choose not to provide the requested information we may not be able to assess your submission.

To promote transparency and open government, we intend to make all submissions publicly available on our website, or in reports. Your name or your organisation's name may appear in these reports with your feedback attributed.

If you would like your submission and/or feedback to be kept confidential, please let us know when making your submission. You will be asked for your confidentiality preference at question 1.

If you request your submission be kept confidential, it will not be published on our website or included in any relevant reports, however it will still be subject to the *Government Information Public Access Act 2009*.

Your submission will be stored securely consistent with the department's Records Management Policy and you have the right to request access to, and correction of, your personal information held by the department.

Further details can be found in our privacy statement available on our website.
<https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/privacy>

Information from this form is collected for the purpose of receiving your feedback on the draft regional water strategy. The supply of this information is voluntary. Your details will be stored in NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment records. Information will be stored and managed in accordance with provisions under the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998. It will not be used for any other purpose and will not be given to any other third party except where required by law. To access or correct your personal information, contact us using the information at dpie.nsw.gov.au/contact

1. Information on confidentiality and privacy *

I give my permission for my submission to be publicly available on the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment website.

☒ Yes ☐ No

I would like my personal details to be kept confidential.

☒ Yes ☐ No

2. Your details

Email address *

Name *

Address *

Contact phone number *

Do you identify as an Aboriginal person?

- ☐ Yes ☒ No

Are you an individual or representing an organisation?

- ☒ Individual ☐ Organisation

3. Organisation or business details

Who do you represent?

- ☐ **Government:**
☐ Commonwealth ☐ New South Wales ☐ State other ☐ Local
- ☐ **Local Water Utility**
- ☐ **Peak representative organisation:**
☐ Environment ☐ Industry ☐ Business group or business chamber ☐ Community organisation
- ☒ **Other**

Horticulture and Cropping Farming

4. Draft regional water strategy objectives and vision

The draft Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy is one of 13 strategies (12 regional water strategies and a Greater Sydney Water Strategy) being developed by the department. All regional water strategies are being developed in line with the following objectives.

- **Deliver and manage water for local communities**
 - Improve water security, water quality and flood management for regional towns and communities.
- **Enable economic prosperity**
 - Improve water access reliability for regional industries.
- **Recognise and protect Aboriginal water rights, interests and access to water**
 - Including Aboriginal heritage assets.
- **Protect and enhance the environment**
 - Improve the health and integrity of environmental systems and assets, including by improving water quality.
- **Affordability**
 - Identify least cost policy and infrastructure options.

All draft regional water strategy options need to address at least one of the above objectives. Our vision for this strategy is to have healthy and resilient water resources (that withstand extreme events and adapt to these changes) for a liveable and prosperous Macquarie-Castlereagh region.

To achieve this, we need to position the region so there is the right amount of water of the right quality, delivered in the right way to meet the future needs of Aboriginal people, towns, communities, industries and the environment.

Do you support this vision for the Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy?

☐ Yes

☒ No

If no, please outline your vision for the long term management of water resources in this region?

The Bathurst Regional Council vision strategy is solely for the town water supply. The Vision has not considered the impacts on the irrigation industry along the valley. Our vision for the valley is for the NSW Water to control Ben Chifley Dam and look at the prospects of raising the dam wall. Bathurst has grown substantially in the past 20 years and we feel this is inevitable, especially now that Orange is now using the catchment as well.

5. Information and modelling used to develop the Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy

The draft Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy packages the most up to date information and evidence with all the tools we have – policy, planning, behavioural, regulatory, technology and infrastructure solutions.

We have used the following information to develop the draft Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy.

- **New climate data:**
 - Observed historical climate data - recorded rainfall, temperature and evaporation data.
 - Paleoclimate data - scientific reconstructed data using sources such as tree rings.
 - Climate drivers – key drivers of wet and dry periods.
- **Review of existing studies**
 - to identify drivers and risks for water resource management.
- **Community engagement:**
 - Local councils and joint council organisations.
 - Aboriginal peak bodies and Aboriginal community groups.
 - Review of previous water management consultations.

A) Do you have any comments about the information used to develop this strategy?

PLEASE REFER TO ATTACHMENT.

B) Please provide details if there is additional information you think we should consider?

The proposal to change the Upper Macquarie WSP in regard to pumping restrictions for unregulated users should receive as much public input from all stakeholders as possible. Given that Chifley dam releases supply Bathurst with water for about 50% of the year, any pumping restriction for unregulated users should only apply during these times and not when purely unregulated flows are being used.

6. Stochastic modelling method

We used a stochastic modelling method (based on the statistical characteristics of the new climate data) in order to get a dataset covering up to 10,000 years. This enables us to quantify the natural variability and extremes in the region with greater certainty.

A) Do you have any comments about the modelling method used to develop this strategy?

B) Is there any additional information that you believe could help us assess the benefits and disadvantages of draft options?

7. Opportunities and challenges for water management in the Macquarie-Castlereagh region

During the Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy drafting stage, the following opportunities, risks and challenges were identified.

- **Climate conditions combined with current operation assumptions are placing the region's water resources under stress**
 - Region has a naturally variable climate that needs to be planned for.
 - Decreased inflows to dams in the region.
 - Increased potential for droughts.
 - Challenges in delivering water to the end of the system.
- **Need to rethink how we manage water in the region**
 - Improved understanding of extreme events needs to be included in water allocations.
 - Greater transparency about water security risks.
 - New water infrastructure needs to support population growth centres.
 - New measures to reduce demand and improve water efficiency is needed.
 - Rethink the types of industries in the region to reduce water demand and use water more efficiently.
- **Water is essential for Aboriginal people's health, wellbeing and connection to Country:**
 - The health of the waterways impacts wellbeing.
 - Current cultural water entitlements do not meet the needs of Aboriginal people.
 - Opportunities to include Aboriginal people's involvement in water management.

- **Critical environmental assets need to be protected**
 - Healthy water sources support the region's environment.
 - River ecosystems are under stress.
 - Future actions should support environmental outcomes across the whole system including the Macquarie Marshes.
- **Better management of groundwater**
 - Groundwater sources are critical and need to be used more efficiently.
 - More knowledge is needed about groundwater recharge rates.

A) Do you have any comments on the opportunities, risks and challenges identified?

B) Are there any additional opportunities, risks and challenges that we should consider and what options could address these?

8. Draft Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy options

We have developed a long list of options that could be included in the final Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy. The options consider the opportunities and challenges facing the region and meet at least one regional water strategy objective.

The 49 options are grouped in different categories, being:

- maintaining and diversifying water supplies.
- protecting and enhancing natural ecosystems.
- Supporting water use efficiency and conservation.
- strengthening community preparedness for climate extremes.
- improving recognition of Aboriginal people's water rights, interests and access to water.

Only feasible options will be progressed to the final strategy stage – following a rigorous assessment process. We are seeking your feedback to inform the options assessment process.

Draft options for the Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy are outlined below.

Maintaining and diversifying water supplies

1. A new mid system re-regulating weir on the Macquarie River	7. Reuse, recycling and stormwater projects
2. Access water from Burrendong Dam's deep storage	8. Burrendong Dam to Nyngan pipeline
3. Managed aquifer recharge investigations and policy	9. Pipeline from the proposed new mid-system weir near Gin Gin to Nyngan
4. Improving town water security in the upper Macquarie unregulated river system	10. Gunningbar Creek pipeline
5. Drought protocols for Bathurst and Oberon town water supply	11. Increase Burrendong Dam's Full Supply Level
6. Inter-regional connections project investigation	12. Increase outlet valve capacity at Burrendong Dam
	13. Reliable access to groundwater by towns

Protecting and enhancing natural ecosystems

14. Address channel constraints to delivering environmental flows to the Macquarie Marshes	23. Modification and/or removal of existing floodwork structures causing adverse impacts
15. NSW Fish Passage Strategy	24. Relieve flow constraints on the Cudgegong River at Rocky Waterhole Bridge
16. Introduce flow variability in the distributary (effluent) creeks	25. Improved understanding of groundwater processes
17. Determine the feasibility of delivering water to the Talga Wetland/ Overflow of the lower Crooked Creek	26. Sustainable access to groundwater
18. Undertake channel works to reinstate natural channel profiles in selected streams in the southern Macquarie Marshes	27. Improved clarity in managing groundwater resources sustainably
19. Formalise channel sharing arrangements	28. Investigation of water quality mitigation measures
20. Implement a native fish restoration project	29. River Ranger program
21. Diversion screens to prevent fish extraction at pump offtakes	30. Secure flows for Beemunnel Aboriginal Place
22. Cold water pollution mitigation measures	31. Connectivity with downstream systems

Supporting water use and delivery efficiency

32. End of system efficient stock and domestic water delivery options	34. Market measures to support Dubbo's town water supply
33. Enterprise water use efficiency programs	

Strengthening community preparedness for climate extremes

- | | |
|---|--|
| 35. Investigation of licence conversions | 39. Capacity building program:
- new climate data/modelling
- managing groundwater resources sustainably |
| 36. New drought operational rules (Macquarie River) | 40. Investigation to maintain amenity for regional towns during drought |
| 37. Review of regulated river water accounting and allocation process | 41. Land use change impact on water resources |
| 38. Improved data collection and information sharing | |

Improving recognition of Aboriginal people's water rights, interests and access to water

- | | |
|--|--|
| 42. Culturally appropriate water knowledge program | 46. Water portfolio project for Aboriginal communities |
| 43. Water-dependent cultural practices and site identification | 47. Aboriginal cultural water access licences review |
| 44. Shared benefit project (environment and cultural outcomes) | 48. Co-management investigation of Travelling Stock Reserves |
| 45. Regional Aboriginal Water Advisory Committee | 49. Regional Cultural Water Officer employment program |

A) Which five (5) options do you think are most important?

Please list the option numbers in order of importance with the first option being most important

Option Number

Option Number

Option Number

Option Number

Option Number

B) Please comment on why you think these options are most important?

C) Which five (5) options do you think are least important (if any)?

Please list the option numbers in order of least importance with the first option being least important

Option Number

Option Number

Option Number

Option Number

Option Number

D) Please comment on why you think these options are least important?

E) Do you have any comments on the draft options?

9. Option combinations

The option list provided in the draft strategy also identifies potential combinations of options. These combinations recognise that most options require associated works, further assessments and/or legislative, policy and planning changes to ensure they address the risks and challenges identified in the Macquarie-Castlereagh region and do not have unintended impacts.

A) Do you have any thoughts on how the options could be combined with other options?

B) Are there additional options that we should consider?

10. Other comments

Do you have any other comments about the Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy?

PLEASE REFER TO ATTACHMENT

11. How did you hear about the public exhibition of this strategy?

We are interested to know how you heard about the opportunity to make a submission. Please indicate the communication methods below:

- ☐ Newspaper
- ☒ Radio
- ☐ Department of Planning, Industry and Environment website
- ☐ Direct email
- ☐ Social media
- ☐ Have your say NSW Government website
- ☐ Communication from peak body
- ☒ Other

WORD OF MOUTH

12. Additional Information and submission process

If you would like to provide any supporting documents to help us understand your view, please either, email these from the same email you provided in this form, or attach supporting documents to this form if you are returning your submission by mail.

All submissions on the draft Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy will be reviewed following the public exhibition period. Further targeted engagement will be undertaken along with the final phase of stakeholder engagement later in the year to review the final documents.

@ Please email your completed submission and supporting documents to regionalwater.strategies@dpie.nsw.gov.au

✉ or post to Regional Water Strategies, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124 by 13 November, 2020.

💻 Further details on all regional water strategies can be found on our website <https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/regional-water-strategies>

Thank you for your submission.

5.A) Do you have any comments about the information used to develop this strategy.

Looking at Councils weekly reports published each Tuesday on the Council website for the past 2019/20 financial year shows essentially that Bathurst Council relied on flows from the Fish river for 32 weeks in 2019/2020 and only released large volumes of town water from Chifley dam for a 20-week period from the week ending 8/10/19 to 18/2/20. This period over summer occurred when the Fish river stopped flowing. During this 20-week period Council released 2584 ML of water and pumped out of the Macquarie river 1581MS for the Bathurst Town water supply. The balance of $2584 - 1581 = 1004$ ML can be put down to in-stream losses, irrigators offtakes and flows over the Bathurst water treatment works weir at Gormans Hill. Bathurst Council has a daily record of the water height in the weir so should be able to account for what water flows over the weir. In this example of Chifley dam releases in 2019/2020 at critical time when the Fish river has either stopped flowing, or flows are too low to draw on, Council has only released $2584/1581 = 1.6$ times the water they need, not 4 to 5 times as stated in the draft Macquarie river water strategy document. However, for 2019/2020 irrigators had only a 20% allocation. For 2018/2019 I have detailed daily dam release figures but on the yearly town water extractions. For 2018/2019 the total dam releases were 7980 ML over a period of 202 days or 29 weeks. This period allowed a 100% allocation for irrigators. Reported yearly town water extractions totalled 300 ML. The in-stream losses, irrigators offtake and flows over the Bathurst water treatment works weir at Gormans Hill were $7980 - 3000 = 4980$ ML. That is around 5 times the 2019/2020 period. Council has only released $7980/3000 = 2.7$ times the water they needed, still not 4 to 5 times as stated in the draft Macquarie river water strategy document.

10. Other comments Do you have any other comments about the Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy?

Bathurst Regional Council has not taken any consideration to the Horticulture and Cropping industries that rely on the reliable flows of the Macquarie and Fish rivers. These farming enterprisers have been operating in the valley for many years and are a valuable economic resource that needs to be recognised. If the proposed pipeline from Chifley dam goes ahead this will give Bathurst Regional Council complete control of water releases into the Macquarie, which we fear will greatly impact our future livelihoods. This is why we strongly believe that now is the time for State Water to have full control of our part of the Murry Darling system.