

Regional Water Strategies Public Exhibition 2

Submission Questionnaire



Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy

Challenges and shortlisted actions

The NSW Government is taking action to improve long-term water security for Macquarie-Castlereagh. The Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy sets out a shortlist of proposed actions to help deliver healthy and resilient water resources for a liveable and prosperous region.

Your voice is important

This is your opportunity to let us know which actions you support and think should be implemented to help set the region up for the future.

This questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete, and your response can remain anonymous if you wish (see question 7).

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

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

You can also provide feedback via [our submission platform](#).

1. Your details

*** Do you identify as an Aboriginal person?** (select one)

☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ Choose not to answer

*** Are you making this submission as an individual or as a representative of an organisation?** (select one)

☒ Individual ☐ Organisation

2. Organisation or business details

If making this submission as a representative of an organisation, who do you represent? (select one)

Government (select one)

☐ Commonwealth ☐ New South Wales ☐ State other ☐ Local

☐ Local Water Utility

Peak representative organisation (select one)

☐ Environment ☐ Industry ☐ Business group or business chamber ☐ Community

Aboriginal organisation (select one)

☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ **Other** (select and provide details)

☒ N/A

3. Regional water challenges

We have identified **five water challenges** that are most important to address in the Macquarie-Castlereagh region. More detail about each regional challenge is available in the Consultation Paper.

1 Reducing water supply risks for regional cities, towns and villages

Bathurst, Orange and Dubbo are large and growing regional cities in the Macquarie valley. These cities are expected to grow by 20–30% over the next 20 years. The water supplies for these cities also underpin the water security of surrounding smaller towns and communities during times of drought.

Even with recent investments in water security measures, Bathurst and Orange require further immediate investment over the next few years to ensure the security of their water supplies is maintained.

Groundwater is an important water source for towns in the region, being the primary source of supply for many towns and an important backup source for others. There is uncertainty about water security in severe drought for towns that use groundwater, especially from the alluvial groundwater systems.

2 Supplying water to high priority needs in the lower river system and connected valleys

The Macquarie River system is over 960km long and there are a range of high priority needs towards the end of the system, including:

- the towns of Warren, Nyngan and Cobar
- internationally significant Macquarie Marshes
- critical mineral mines
- landholders on rivers and creeks with stock and domestic water needs
- flows into the Barwon-Darling River that support communities, industries and the environment downstream

The long river system presents challenges for delivering water to the end of the system, particularly during dry periods, as a large portion of the water released from Burrendong Dam seeps into the dry riverbed and evaporates along the way.

A more variable and potentially drier climate will make it even more difficult to meet high priority needs towards the end of the river system, especially during dry periods.

3 Supporting a growing regional economy in a future of potentially reduced water availability

Agriculture and mining are major water-reliant industries in the Macquarie-Castlereagh region. The tourist economy is also important in the region's east and includes well-known food and wine destinations. Climate change could reduce water availability for these existing industries, leading to adverse economic and social impacts. While there is also significant potential for future development in high value industries, a shortage of reliable water supplies may hinder this growth.

4 Addressing barriers to Aboriginal water rights

The lands and waters of the Macquarie-Castlereagh region have been occupied by the Wiradjuri, Gomeroi, Ngemba, Wailwan and Ngiyamapaa Nations for over 60,000 years. They have always been closely linked to rivers, groundwater, billabongs and wetlands, and this relationship is essential to culture, community and connection to Country.

Water management arrangements, limited water ownership, and poor access to waterways and culturally important sites impact Aboriginal people's ability to care for Country. We need to support access to water improve our engagement with Aboriginal people, and secure flows for water dependent cultural sites—so we can all benefit from traditional knowledge in managing our water resources.

5 Maintaining and improving the health and resilience of the region's aquatic and floodplains ecosystems

Water infrastructure, water extraction, land management practices, and pest species have impacted water-dependent ecosystems and native species in the Macquarie-Castlereagh region. This includes the internationally Ramsar-listed Macquarie Marshes, which is ecologically, culturally, socially and economically important.

While water reforms have partially improved the condition and resilience of these environmental assets, there are parts of the catchment that are still in poor condition.

To maintain and improve the region's ecological assets into the future, we need to ensure that the right mix of flows are available at the times that they need them. This will become increasingly difficult under a drier future climate, where the potential for extended dry periods could increase the risk for many critical environmental assets.

Do you agree that these are the priority water challenges for the Macquarie-Castlereagh region that we need to focus on? (select one)

☒ Yes ☐ No

If no, please outline what you see as the priority water challenges in this region over the next 20 – 40 years?

I support all of item 2 except for additional water for the Marshes.

4. Addressing the challenges

We have developed three regional priorities with actions under each. We want to know which of the actions you support.

The regional priorities are:

- 1 Secure water supplies for growing regional cities and towns
- 2 Reduce water security risks in the region's west
- 3 Supporting industry and community climate adaptation
- 4 Best use of existing water for the environment

Priority 1: Secure water supplies for growing regional cities and towns

The actions shortlisted under this priority aim to:

- make better use of the available resources
- respond to the needs of a growing population
- respond to the risks associated with climate variability and change.

Proposed action		Do you support this action?
1.1	Confirm the level of water security needed to support regional cities	☒ Yes ☐ No
1.2	Establish a governance framework to coordinate actions under Priority 1	☒ Yes ☐ No
1.3	Develop guidelines for managing extreme events in the upper Macquarie	☒ Yes ☐ No
1.4	Adopt a stronger focus on urban water conservation and efficiency	☒ Yes ☐ No
1.5	Invest in innovative water supply options	☒ Yes ☐ No
1.6	Plan for the best long-term augmentation solution for the upper Macquarie	☒ Yes ☐ No
1.7	Reduce uncertainty in groundwater security for the region's towns	☐ Yes ☒ No
1.8	Support management of Oberon's town water quality issues	☐ Yes ☒ No

A) Do you have any comments on the proposed actions identified?

1.7 - Large amounts of Bore water should not be taken to augment town water supply without serious consultation with stakeholders and neighbouring landholders. Goes to equity in the system.

1.8 - Unfamiliar with detail / area.

Priority 2: Reduce water security risks for the Lower Macquarie

The actions shortlisted under this priority aim to:

- deliver water more efficiently to high priority needs and reduce town water security risks in the lower Macquarie region
- improve the drought resilience of industry in the lower Macquarie region.

Proposed action		Do you support this action?
2.1	Investigate an additional off-river storage at Nyngan	☒ Yes ☐ No
2.2	Create water savings through changed operation of regulated effluent creeks	☐ Yes ☒ No
2.3	Continue to investigate regional water security solutions for the lower Macquarie	☐ Yes ☒ No
2.4	Investigate ways to improve connectivity with the Barwon-Darling on a multi-valley scale	☒ Yes ☐ No

A) Do you have any comments on the proposed actions identified?

Item 2.2 - The proposed action of the draft regional water strategy - Macquarie - Castlereagh - is not acceptable to me. In fact I strongly oppose it. The effluent creeks, Macquarie Effluent Creeks Association (MECA) and the Lower Macquarie Effluent Creeks System (LMECS) provide a wonderful and diverse environment for a large area in the lower Macquarie Valley. This area would otherwise be dry and harsh. The (LMECS) achieve this with a relatively small amount of water.

Item 2.4 - The LMECS provide a natural connectivity to the Barwon - Barling system.

Priority 3: Support industry climate adaptation

The actions shortlisted under this priority aim to:

- strengthen the resilience of the regional economy, including existing businesses, industries and communities, and their adaptation to a drier, more severe future climate.

Proposed action		Do you support this action?
3.1	Invest in continuous improvement to surface and groundwater modelling	☒ Yes ☐ No
3.2	Improve public access to climate information and water availability forecasts	☒ Yes ☐ No
3.3	Support adoption of on-farm climate adaptation and water efficiency measures	☒ Yes ☐ No
3.4	Undertake research to inform reviews of groundwater extraction and condition limits	☒ Yes ☐ No
3.5	Develop ongoing arrangements for participation of local Aboriginal people in water management	☒ Yes ☐ No
3.6	Support place-based initiatives to deliver cultural outcomes for Aboriginal people	☐ Yes ☒ No
3.7	Support the development of new water related Aboriginal business opportunities in the Macquarie-Castlereagh region	☒ Yes ☐ No
3.8	Modernise the water management framework so it can continue to support sustainable economic diversification	☒ Yes ☐ No
3.9	Improve public access to the Macquarie Marshes	☐ Yes ☒ No

A) Do you have any comments on the proposed actions identified?

Priority 4: Best use of existing water for the environment

The actions shortlisted under this priority aim to:

- limit or remove pressures and impacts related to water infrastructure
- enable water for the environment to be delivered to its best effect during wet and dry periods
- build knowledge of the region's water dependent ecosystems and assets, and the impacts of climate change on their health and resilience
- improve water resource health through better land management.

Proposed action		Do you support this action?
4.1	Modify or remove barriers to delivering water for the environment	☒ Yes ☐ No
4.2	Reinstate natural channel profiles in selected streams in the southern Macquarie Marshes	☐ Yes ☒ No
4.3	Mitigate impacts to fish communities	☒ Yes ☐ No
4.4	Remediate unapproved floodplain structures	☒ Yes ☐ No
4.5	Provide clarity and certainty for environmental needs during drought operations	☒ Yes ☐ No
4.6	Assess gaps in the flow regime and identify cooperative actions to improve ecological outcomes	☐ Yes ☒ No
4.7	Fully implement the NSW Floodplain Harvesting Program	☒ Yes ☐ No
4.8	Identify regionally significant riparian, wetland and floodplain areas to protect or rehabilitate	☒ Yes ☐ No

A) Do you have any comments on the proposed actions identified?

5. Other comments

A) Should any proposed actions in this Consultation Paper not be shortlisted and why?

Item 2.2 should not be proposed as an action because the socio-economic value of having the creeks running far outweighs the impact of them not running. There is also a question of inequitable sharing of water, with closure of the creeks.

B) Should any other options in Attachment 1 of the Consultation Paper be shortlisted and why?

A survey for a new dams should be undertaken for future growth.

6. Implementation of the Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy

An Implementation Plan will be included in the final Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy.

A) Which actions should be implemented first and why?

Eliminating action 2.2

Making your submission public

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.

If you request that your submission is to 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.
www.industry.nsw.gov.au/privacy

7. Information on confidentiality and privacy *

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

☒ Yes ☐ No

I would like my personal details to be kept confidential.

☒ Yes ☐ No

8. Would you like to be kept updated on progress on the development and implementation of the Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy?

☒ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please provide your details below.

9. 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 and Environment website
- ☐ Direct email ☐ Social media ☐ Have your say NSW Government website
- ☐ Communication from peak body ☐ Word of mouth
- ☒ Other (select and provide details) Heard from a neighbour.

10. Additional Information

If you would like to provide any supporting documents to help us understand your feedback, please 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.

Please email your completed submission and any supporting documents to:

regionalwater.strategies@dpie.nsw.gov.au

CLICK HERE TO EMAIL SUBMISSION

Or post to:

Regional Water Strategies
Department of Planning and Environment
Locked Bag 5022
Parramatta NSW 2124

Submissions close Friday 18 November 2022, 11.59pm

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



Thank you for your submission.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

18 November, 2022

[REDACTED]
Regional Water Strategies
Department of Planning & Environment
Locked Bag 5022
PARAMATTA NSW 2124

Good Morning [REDACTED],

**RE: Regional Water Strategies Response – Public Exhibition 2
Macquarie – Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy – Shortlisted Actions**

I am a farmer, landholder, stakeholder and member of the Lower Macquarie Effluent Creeks System, hereafter (LMECS). I have considered your proposed regional water strategy very carefully. While there is much to admire in the strategy, there are some aspects of it that I do not agree with.

The proposed action 2.2 of the draft strategy, which proposes to return the Gunningbar, Duck and upper part of the Crooked creek to a more “natural regime” with occasional periods of no -flow, is not acceptable to me. In fact, I strongly oppose this action.

The LMECS provide a wonderful and diverse environment for a large area in the lower Macquarie valley. The LMECS achieve this with a relatively small amount of water. Local and Aboriginal people from nearby towns, Warren, Nyngan and Brewarrina all enjoy the recreational aspects of the Creeks.

For the same relatively small amount of water, the LMECS have provided stock and domestic water for thriving livestock and agricultural industries, critical to our local communities and Councils.

Stopping flows in the LMECS would cause sever bogging and large numbers of livestock deaths. It would also cause the death of many native flora and fauna living in the creeks.

The irrigation industry would become unsustainable and cost many their livelihoods. There would be much loss of income and employment to the district.

The Tritton Mines, one of our largest employers would suffer significantly and probably close in the longer term, causing further unemployment.

The LMECS are in many ways a “West Marsh”, sitting right alongside the internationally known Macquarie Marshes. The LMECS enjoy many of the same flora and fauna as the Macquarie Marshes and are an important adjunct to them.

For the above reasons, both environmental and socio- economic I strongly oppose action 2.2 in the draft regional water strategy.

I would welcome further discussion and consultation with the DPIE regarding the LMECS and moving forward with the draft regional water strategy.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]