

Submission Questionnaire

Draft Gwydir Regional Water Strategy - Submission Form



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 Gwydir 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 Gwydir Regional Water Strategy and that it serves the regional community, including Aboriginal people, 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 1).

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](https://www.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**

Individual

4. Draft regional water strategy objectives and vision

The draft Gwydir 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 Gwydir 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 Gwydir Regional Water Strategy?

☒ Yes ☐ No

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

5. Information and modelling used to develop the Gwydir Regional Water Strategy

The draft Gwydir 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 Gwydir 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?

The Gwydir Regional Water Strategy has had a lack of consultation with the local farming community and key stakeholders who are part of the farming community that will be affected if a dam is placed in the river. The majority of property landholders potentially affected were unaware that a dam was being proposed that would cover their good country. To hold a meeting in Moree 100km away at harvest time without writing to and informing landholders is not proper consultation.

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

Consideration to increase water use efficiency by irrigators and cost of funding this vs a dam needs to be considered.

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?

The stochastic modelling system is inherently random. When planning water infrastructure it should be based on an empirical fact model.

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

Option 2 will deliver minimal benefit to the system. A low flat dam will have high evaporation rates and render a large amount of good farming country non viable. The benefit needs to be assessed on the needs of the communities. Taking land from small scale farmers to ensure water for large scale irrigators is not an equitable option. The powerline from Armidale to Moree would have to be shifted and so would some roads affecting more properties. These people are probably unaware of these issues.

7. Opportunities and challenges for water management in the Gwydir region

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

- **Climate conditions place considerable stress on towns, communities, industries and ecosystems:**
 - Region moves between wet and dry period and droughts will be more frequent.
 - Record low inflows to Copeton Dam.
 - Towns and villages on single supply sources will have future water security challenges.
 - Average annual extraction for some water users could decline.
 - Large on-farm storages experience high evaporation losses.
- **Review how we manage, use and deliver water to meet future challenges:**
 - Use new climate modelling to review water allocations and river operations.
 - Managing floodplain harvesting to protect environmental and cultural assets.
 - Moree is expected to grow over the next 20 years.
 - Water reliability is critical to attract business and jobs.
- **Water is essential for Aboriginal people's health, wellbeing and connection to Country:**
 - Health of waterways impacts the wellbeing of the Traditional Owners and Custodians.
 - Provisions for accessing water for cultural purposes.
 - Improve Aboriginal people's involvement in water management.

- **Protecting critical environmental assets:**
 - Healthy water sources support the region's environment.
 - Water set aside for the environment has helped to maintain the fish community.
 - Management of environmental water in unregulated rivers.
 - Gwydir wetlands are a significant Aboriginal cultural site.
- **Better management of groundwater:**
 - Groundwater sources are critical for towns industries and ecosystems.
 - Declining aquifer levels in some areas.
 - More efficient and equitable use of groundwater.
 - More knowledge is needed about groundwater recharge rates.

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

Are there other options for water supply for Moree and other western towns such as utilizing underground water and piping it to these communities.

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

Is an option 2 dam a cost effective option. Will it supply water in the necessary time frame given that we could be in drought before it is built and water would still not be available for these communities. Living just above the junction of the Warialda Creek and the Gwydir River I have seen 3 major flood events, that would be enough to fill the proposed dam, in 25 years. The amount of water that flows down all the supplying rivers and creeks would not be enough to sustain a dam in other years. Topping up the dam from Coneton would only work if

8. Draft Gwydir Regional Water Strategy options

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

The 40 options are grouped in different categories, being:

- maintaining and diversifying water supplies.
- protecting and enhancing natural ecosystems.
- supporting water use and delivery efficiency and water 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 Gwydir Regional Water Strategy are outlined below.

Maintaining and diversifying water supplies

1. Enlargement of Tareelaroi Weir	5. Reliable access to groundwater by towns
2. New Lower Gravesend Dam on the Gwydir River downstream of Warialda Creek	6. Townwater security planning and investment for Bingara
3. Reuse, recycling and stormwater projects	7. Town water security planning and investment for Uralla Shire
4. Managed aquifer recharge investigation and policy	8. Reliable access to groundwater for the Moree Special Activation Precinct

Protecting and enhancing natural ecosystems

9. Removal of system constraints in the Gwydir catchment to improve flows reaching the Gwydir Wetland	16. Improved clarity in managing groundwater resources sustainably
10. NSW Fish Passage Strategy	17. Active management to share flows between consumptive and other uses
11. Ability to direct excess supplementary flows	18. Modification and / or removal of floodwork structures causing adverse impacts
12. Cold water pollution migration measures	19. River Ranger program
13. Diversion screens to prevent fish extraction at pump offtakes	20. Investigation of water quality mitigation measures
14. Improved understanding of groundwater processes	21. Secure flows for water-dependent cultural sites
15. Sustainable access to groundwater by all users	

Supporting water use and delivery efficiency

22. Water efficiency projects (towns and industry)	25. Review urban water restriction policy
23. Review of water markets in the Gwydir region	26. Addressing inefficient delivery system management
24. Connectivity with downstream systems	

Strengthening community preparedness for climate extremes

27. New drought operational rules (Gwydir River)	31. Education and capacity building program
28. Review of surface water accounting and allocation process	- new climate data/modelling
29. Investigation of licence conversions	- managing groundwater resources sustainably
30. Improved data collection and information sharing	32. Land use change impact on water resources

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

33. Culturally appropriate water knowledge program	37. Regional Aboriginal Water Advisory Committee
34. Water-dependent cultural practices and site identification project	38. Water portfolio project for Aboriginal communities
35. Shared benefit project (environment and cultural outcomes)	39. Co-management investigation of Travelling Stock Reserves
36. Regional Cultural Water Officer employment program	40. Aboriginal cultural water access licence review

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 22

Option Number 25

Option Number 26

Option Number 5

Option Number 27

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

We need to ensure communities and towns have equitable access to water and that all users are doing their best to not waste it. Would enlargement of Tarellaroi weir ensure that communities have immediate access to extra water be more feasible than a dam at upper gravesend. It is difficult for us to assess the cost difference when we don't have any costs. On the other hand would the extra water be enough for the communities involved. If not then it would not be sensible to take good farming country from these land holders to increase

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 34

Option Number 19

Option Number

Option Number

Option Number

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

I don't think that a culturally significant land area should be more valuable than our farm that has significant memories and our home let alone a way of earning an income. If significant cultural areas can be protected from water damage that is good but the value should be equivalent to our farms.

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

As Copeton dam has been full I think twice in the 25 years I have been here I don't think increasing its capacity would be of much benefit unless combined with the following suggestion.

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 Gwydir region and do not have unintended impacts.

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

The main limiting factor is rain and we just can't make that happen. I think if it was feasible to bring water from the coast to Glen Innes then to Copeton, where there is significant storage capacity already, the Copeton would be able to supply the western towns by increasing flows down the gwydir. The funds for a gravesend dam would not be needed and could be channelled into this option. This could ensure a more consistent flow of water.

B) Are there additional options that we should consider?

10. Other comments

Do you have any other comments about the Gwydir Regional Water Strategy?

There needs to be further consultation with local government, community and agricultural stakeholders. More meetings need to be held in each community with these proposals advertised so every one is aware option the potential outcomes and could make suggestions.

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

A resident of Bingara informed Hugh Munro who informed neighbours. The Add in the paper provided details of a date effective engagement. Although we also knew about the date that had been

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 Gwydir 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.