

Submission on Macquarie-Castlereagh Water Strategy Second Draft

27 October 2022

I wish my submission to be made public

1. Protecting the health of rivers and wetlands should be the highest priority of the strategy.

- Under the NSW Water Management Act 2000 the environment has top priority and for good reason. When the environment is healthy, we can all be healthy. This Act has been ignored by water management authorities.
- The Wambuul-Macquarie River originally provided 21% of flows to the Darling-Baaka River. Too much water is taken out of the rivers that feed the Darling-Baaka River, causing environmental catastrophies like the Menindee fish kills of 2019 and the death of the fresh-water mussels that depended on water flow.
- The Ramsar listed Macquarie Marshes have been shrinking for forty years. I drove across a road the nominally took me through the heart of the marshes in the early 2000s, but could not find the marshes.
- Native fish numbers are down by 90% in the last 140 years.
- More water should be bought back for the environment.
- Floodplain harvesting should not be licenced until an assessment of the environmental damage it has caused has been done and illegal structures removed from the floodplain.

2. Stop ignoring recent droughts when working out how much water to release from Burrendong dam.

- No rainfall data from droughts since 2004 are used when working out how much water to allocate from Burrendong dam. This excludes the worst part of the Millenium Drought and the sharp drought of 2017-2020. This exclusion is simply unimaginable and unjustifiable.
- It is assumed Burrendong dam will fill every two years, regardless of how little it rains. The government allocates water from Burrendong dam before it is even in the dam.
- Burrendong is a very large dam, holding 1,188 Gegalitres when full. Dubbo uses about 7 Gegalitres per year from the dam. If the water in Burrendong was managed more responsibly, Dubbo and the rest of the valley plus Nyngan and Cobar would have very secure water supply.

3. Cancel the Gin Gin re-regulating weir project

- No more public money should be spent on investigating the Gin Gin re-regulating weir project.
- The existing 120 year old Gin Gin weir should be replaced with a new fish passage structure designed for the dam safety upgrade fishway project, as has been legally required since 2009.
- The proposed Gin Gin re-regulating weir would have had a significant impact on:
 - First Nations cultural sites

- Threatened Murray Cod breeding habitat
- Remaining threatened natural places
- Ramsar listed wetlands
- Migratory bird habitat
- The purpose of the proposed Gin Gin re-regulating weir was to provide more water for general security water licence holders, at the expense of the Macquarie Marshes, First Nations cultural sites, towns and the Darling/Baaka River all the way downstream from Brewarrina.
- The government should announce that The Gin Gin weir project is cancelled.