

regionalwater.strategies@dpi.nsw.gov.au

Submission to Water & Industry

Draft Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy

New Drought Operational Rules (Macquarie River) The lower regulated Macquarie River/Buckiinguy Marshes / Southern Macquarie Marshes Nature Reserve would have once been (pre dam/diversions) the most reliable water sources for wildlife during droughts. In the last drought It appears as though this area beyond Oxley Gauge 421022 was given very low priority and water was only made available to Oxley Fish Pond at State 3 Water restrictions.

I propose that intermittent flows/pulses during the droughts be provided beyond Oxley Gauge (even monthly) in the Macquarie River to replenish water holes in the Buckiinguy Marshes and Southern Marsh Nature Reserve. This is the most efficient wetland area to get water to and this will then give wetland depend species such as fish, mussels and turtles an increased chance and it will only take a small additional water as Oxley Fish Pond in already identified as a stage 3 target. There is a abundance of turtles and swamp mussels plus other wildlife in the Buckiinguy Marshes it for a little extra water it didn't make sense that 1000s of turtles and river/swamp mussels were left to perish for what could be described as an unnaturally dry period caused by what human intervention.

New Mid System Re-Regulation Weir. It is concerning that the main reason for this weir appears to be to reduce transmission losses. As the main irrigation season is during the summer months, gauges at Carinda already indicate that there is not a surplus of water running through the system during the summer. Isn't it then a reasonable statement to say that that the Gin Gin weir will decrease water reliability and security during the hot summer months in the Lower Macquarie when the environment is most dependent on water! The weir does not make any sense and is in conflict with other options in the Water Strategy Plan plus it is in conflict with the Water Act.

In summary, the priority of the Water Strategy Plan seems to be to support the irrigation industry. At what point will it be considered that the system is over allocated? Isn't it now obvious that already too much water is getting taken out and not enough left in the system. Why can't the dam be managed better rather than putting ridicules expensive pipelines all over the place. Very disappointing.

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Option 36 : New Drought Operational Rules (Macquarie River)

It would appear the intention of this option is to further decrease water security/reliability to the Lower Regulated Macquarie during droughts.

- Macquarie Marshes were once a refuge for wildlife during dry periods but now they appear to be given low priority with natural flows during the droughts either blocked or diverted resulting in a prolonged unnaturally dry period in the marshes. Flows to the Macquarie Marshes should be a priority during droughts.
- Many of the natural water holes within the Macquarie Marsh areas are silting up due silt sedimentation from upstream runoff and erosion. The need for natural flows to the Marshes during droughts should be the highest priority. Water reliability should be increased, NOT DECREASED.
- Ability of native vegetation to recover and compete against introduced invasive species of plants reduces when flows are held back or diverted during and after droughts. Any option that may impact flows to the Macquarie Marshes during droughts should be only considered after an Environmental Impact Statement is undertaken.
- Environmental Impact of the Regional Water Strategy focus of threatened species. Drying out the Marshes results in mass deaths of water dependent species that do not have the ability to relocated and are not regarded as threatened such as turtles and river/swamp mussels.
- Taking away water reliability to parts of the Macquarie River during droughts will significantly impact the value of land to landholders who lose water reliability/security. Compensation needs to be considered for these landholders. River Pulses should only be considered as a last resort and should also include wetland areas in the Unregulated areas in the Macquarie Marshes as targeted areas.

- The purpose of building dams and storages is to increase water security and reliability to landholders. How can you then now say you are going to decrease water security and reliability to the Macquarie River 200Km downstream of Burrendong Dam?? Will the Gin Gin reregulation Weir be used to reduce flows to the lower regulated Macquarie River?

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In summary, the balance of the Regional Water Strategy Plan seems to be to favour to the upstream community at the expense of the downstream communities. At what point will it be considered that the system is over allocated? Isn't it now obvious that already too much water is getting taken out and not enough left in the system.

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