

# Regional Water Strategy

Lachlan – Implementation Plan

December 2024



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# Acknowledging First Nations people

The NSW Government acknowledges First Nations people as the first Australian people and the Traditional Owners and custodians of the country's lands and water. First Nations people have lived in NSW for over 60,000 years and have formed significant spiritual, cultural and economic connections with its lands and waters.

Today, they practice the oldest living culture on earth.

The NSW Government acknowledges the Barkandji, Maljangapa, Nari Nari, Ngiyampaa, Wiradjuri and Yita Yita people as having an intrinsic connection with the lands and waters of the Lachlan Regional Water Strategy area. The landscape and its waters provide the First Nations people with essential links to their history and help them maintain and practice their traditional culture and lifestyle. We acknowledge that Bila Galari is the traditional Wiradjuri name for the Lachlan River.

We recognise the Traditional Owners as the first managers of Country. Incorporating their culture and knowledge into management of water in the region is a significant step towards closing the gap.

Under this regional water strategy, we seek to establish meaningful and collaborative relationships with First Nations people. We will seek to shift our focus to a Country-centred approach, respecting, recognising and empowering cultural and traditional Aboriginal knowledge in water management processes at a strategic level.

We show our respect for Elders past and present through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places where First Nations people are included socially, culturally and economically.

As we refine and implement the regional water strategy, we commit to helping support the health and wellbeing of waterways and Country by valuing, respecting and being guided by First Nations people, who know that if we care for Country, it will care for us.

We acknowledge that further work is required under this regional water strategy to inform how we care for Country and ensure First Nations people/Traditional Owners hold a strong voice in shaping the future for all communities.

Artist and designer Nikita Ridgeway from Aboriginal design agency, Boss Lady Creative Designs, created the People and Community symbol.

# Implementing the Lachlan Regional Water Strategy

The Lachlan Regional Water Strategy charts the NSW Government's long-term vision and direction for delivering sustainable and resilient water services and contains 22 actions to address the key water challenges of the region over the next 20 to 30 years. The strategy sets out the specific components (sub-actions) required to achieve each action and identifies both funded sub-actions and currently unfunded sub-actions to be implemented later:

- **funded sub-actions** are works that are underway or planned and funded for delivery within 5 years by implementation partners
- **currently unfunded sub-actions** are works that are not currently planned or funded and will have a 5-20-year timeframe for delivery.

This staggered implementation recognises that although all actions are important, we cannot implement all sub-actions immediately.

We have heard from stakeholders that most actions in the strategy should be a priority to implement. We have already started work on many of the strategy's sub-actions. However, not all sub-actions can be progressed at once, and funding is a key consideration in planning when and how the actions will be implemented. Currently unfunded sub-actions specified in the Lachlan Regional Water Strategy will be carried out subject to funding availability.

Regional water strategies are a key tool in seeking funding as future opportunities arise. If funding is secured for currently unfunded sub-actions, the implementation plan may be reviewed to accelerate their delivery.

The Lachlan Regional Water Strategy has been designed to be adaptive. This means we will update the strategy and our implementation approach to respond to changing priorities.

The department will formally review the strategy as circumstances change. Formal reviews also ensure that key assumptions, such as demographics and climate data, have not significantly changed.

## About this implementation plan

Only **funded sub-actions** are included in the implementation plan because it focuses on the first 5 years of implementing the Lachlan Regional Water Strategy.

The implementation plan identifies the lead agency responsible for delivery of the specified sub-action. This allows us to better:

- monitor the progress of actions
- assess the effectiveness of the strategy
- identify areas for improvement.

## Implementation partners

To effectively implement the actions in the strategy, the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW – Water) will work with a diverse group of partners and stakeholders that include government agencies, local government, community and industry groups, and individuals:

- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water – Biodiversity, Conservation and Science (DCCEEW – BCS)
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development – Agriculture (DPIRD – Agriculture)
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development – Fisheries (DPIRD – Fisheries)
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development – Regional Aboriginal Partnership Outcomes (DPIRD – RAPO)
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development – Local Land Services (DPIRD – LLS) – South East, Central Tablelands, Riverina and Central West
- Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure – Planning (DPHI – Planning)
- NSW Reconstruction Authority (RA)
- NSW State Emergency Service (SES)
- Local councils – Balranald, Bland, Blayney, Cabonne, Carrathool, Central Darling, Cobar, Cowra, Forbes, Hay, Hilltops, Lachlan, Parkes, Temora, Upper Lachlan, and Weddin
- Central NSW Joint Organisation of Councils (CNSWJO)
- WaterNSW
- First Nations peak groups and communities (including the Lachlan Regional Aboriginal Water Committee)
- Irrigator groups.

# Monitoring, evaluation and progress reporting

The strategy and the implementation plan are intended to adapt to the dynamic nature of water management in the Lachlan region (see Figure 1). Progress with funded sub-actions (0-to-5-year period) will be regularly evaluated by the department through liaison with lead agencies and recognised supporting/co-lead agencies. Any changes due to variables such as climate cycles, population change, funding availability, and other medium-term events may impact on the implementation of actions and sub-actions.

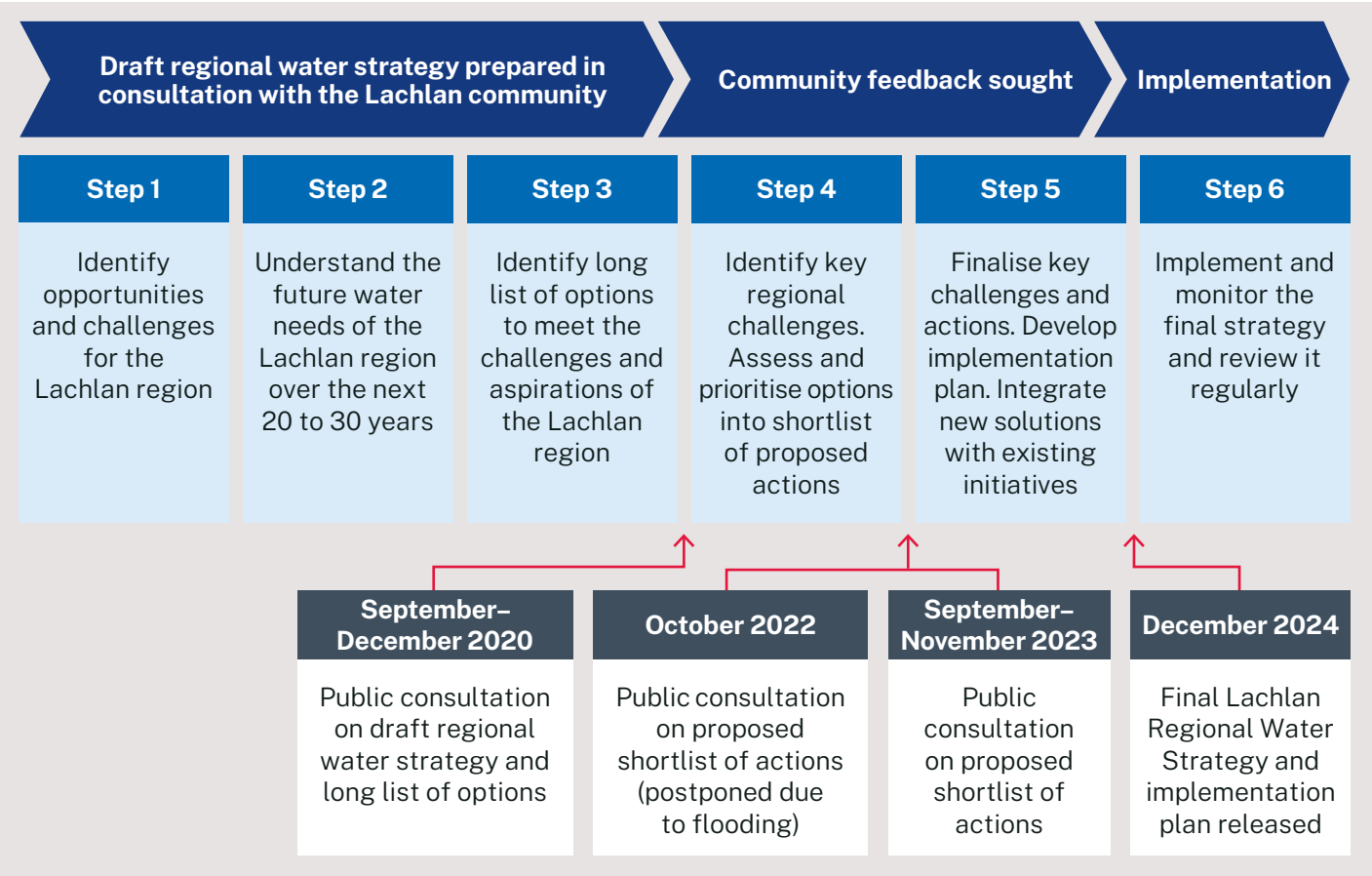
# Reading the implementation plan

The Lachlan Regional Water Strategy is the result of significant analysis and community engagement and builds on a range of existing commitments and work already underway.

The following tables outline funded sub-actions already underway or planned (and funded) by implementation partners, under the 3 priorities for the Lachlan region.

The NSW Government agency or partner identified as responsible for delivering each program in the strategy is listed as ‘Lead’ under each sub-action in the implementation tables.

**Figure 1. Regional water strategies process**





# Priority 1

## Build resilience to climate extremes

Action	Funded sub-actions	Lead
<b>Action 1.1:</b> Improve town water security in the Lachlan region	1.1.1 Continue to support local councils and communities to address water security risks in line with the Regulatory and Assurance Framework for Local Water Utilities.	DCCEEW – Water
	1.1.2 Continue to deliver phase 2 of the Town Water Risk Reduction Program.	DCCEEW – Water
	1.1.3 Investigate ways to bring together the Lachlan and upper Macquarie–Castlereagh regions in a sector-wide forum to coordinate water security issues in the Central West.	DCCEEW – Water
<b>Action 1.2:</b> Support local councils to improve flood risk management	1.2.1 Replace 3 existing floodplain management plans with a single, catchment-wide floodplain management plan (see Action 2.7).	DCCEEW – Water
	1.2.2 Assess and manage flood work applications, and flood risk obligations, including release from dams to minimise flood risk.	WaterNSW
	1.2.3 Continue to progress actions from the 2022 NSW Flood Inquiry through the State Disaster Mitigation Plan (see Challenge 2: Understanding flood risks to individuals, businesses and communities).	NSW RA
<b>Action 1.3:</b> Upgrade the Lachlan Regulated River hydrological model to better represent river operations and drought contingency measures	1.3.1 Further improve the catchment hydrological models on an as-needs basis.	DCCEEW – Water

Action	Funded sub-actions	Lead
<b>Action 1.4:</b> Work with local Aboriginal people to ensure they can participate in water management	1.4.1 Continue to implement Priority 2 of the NSW Water Strategy to strengthen the role of Aboriginal people in water planning and management.	DCCEEW – Water
	1.4.2 Continue to support and regularly engage with the Lachlan Regional Aboriginal Water Committee by ensuring the Regional Water Strategies Program is a standing item on the Lachlan Regional Aboriginal Water Committee's agenda.	DCCEEW – Water
	1.4.3 Explore how Aboriginal people want to be represented on the Lachlan Environmental Water Action Group and how their priorities may be represented in annual and long-term environmental water planning.	DCCEEW – BCS
	1.4.4 Put guidelines in place to ensure fair remuneration for participation by Aboriginal people.	DCCEEW – Water
<b>Action 1.5:</b> Support groundwater use for towns and communities	1.5.1 Continue to support towns and cities using groundwater to improve their urban water planning, in line with the Regulatory and Assurance Framework for Local Water Utilities.	DCCEEW – Water
<b>Action 1.6:</b> Investigate water security for small and remote communities	1.6.1 Continue to work with local water utilities in small and remote communities to roll out current co-funded water and sewerage projects.	DCCEEW – Water
	<p>1.6.2 Work with small and remote local councils, in line with the Regulatory and Assurance Framework to assist them identify and progress priority water security projects for small and remote communities. Projects will need to be scoped on an individual basis and could include investigating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the need to develop specific guidelines to better manage extreme events for towns relying primarily on unregulated water sources<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• upgrades to ageing assets, including town water supply pipelines</li> <li>• potential inter-regional pipeline connections</li> <li>• the feasibility of installing water tanks</li> <li>• the viability of introducing new and emerging technologies such as hydro-panels or off-grid containerised water filtration units.</li> </ul>	DCCEEW – Water

1. The NSW Government has developed an Extreme Events Policy and Incident Response Guidelines for inland NSW valleys, which provide a framework for how decisions are made during extreme events and sets out a range of increasing drought contingency measures to secure water for critical needs. Most of the measures focus on the regulated rivers that are controlled by large state-owned headwater dams, like Wyangala Dam in the Lachlan Valley. Further information on how extreme events are managed in NSW regions is available at: [water.dpie.nsw.gov.au/about-us/how-we-work/legislation-and-policies](http://water.dpie.nsw.gov.au/about-us/how-we-work/legislation-and-policies)

Action	Funded sub-actions	Lead
<b>Action 1.7:</b> Investigate expanding the regional water supply grid	1.7.1 Continue to support local water utilities to undertake effective, evidence-based strategic planning in accordance with section 3 of the Local Water Utilities Regulatory and Assurance Framework.	DCCEEW – Water
	1.7.2 Ensure outcomes of the Belubula Water Security Project’s final business case are considered in the regional water supply grid.	DCCEEW – Water
<b>Action 1.8:</b> Improve the understanding and management of groundwater resources	1.8.1 Progress actions in the NSW Groundwater Strategy that seek to improve our understanding and management of groundwater.	DCCEEW – Water
<b>Action 1.9:</b> Better integrate strategic land use and water planning	1.9.1 Take steps to better integrate land-use planning and water management including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• making improvements to governance, regulatory and advisory functions to enable better outcomes for water management through strategic land use planning and development assessment pathways</li> <li>• embedding water security analysis into regional plans</li> <li>• identifying opportunities for land use planning frameworks to respond to outcomes of climate risk assessments for water management and resilience.</li> </ul>	DPHI – Planning
	1.9.2 Work with local councils, in line with the Regulatory and Assurance Framework to help prioritise activities under Action 4.4 of the NSW Water Strategy, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assessing projected trends in population growth and regional and local development, to identify spatial changes in water demand, growth in town water demands and sources of potential future flood risks, such as new developments</li> <li>• discussing if and how to make decisions on which areas should be elevated for water security due to planned strategic growth areas or concentration of industries in the region</li> <li>• identifying any water-related gaps in the current land use planning framework and assess the adequacy of the current land use planning controls to protect water resources and water dependent ecosystems</li> <li>• embedding water-management principles in local strategic planning to provide a clear implementation pathway for strategies related to water in regional land use plans.</li> </ul>	DCCEEW – Water



# Priority 2

Improve catchment health		
Action	Funded sub-actions	Lead
<b>Action 2.1:</b> Reduce salinity and soil erosion in the Upper Lachlan and Belubula catchments	2.1.1 Continue erosion control works at select locations.	DPIRD – LLS
	2.1.2 Continue to build on knowledge programs that underpin and guide existing revegetation and fencing programs.	DCCEEW – Water
<b>Action 2.2:</b> Protect and rehabilitate regionally significant riparian and in-stream habitats in the Lachlan Regulated River	2.2.1 Understand and integrate local Aboriginal people's knowledge and expertise into delivering river improvement works.	DPIRD – LLS
	2.2.2 Coordinate existing programs that protect Key Fish Habitats <sup>2</sup> to enhance on-ground river health outcomes at priority locations.	DPIRD – Fisheries
<b>Action 2.3:</b> Upgrade and automate existing re-regulating structures	2.3.1 Support an investigation to improve the delivery of water through the Mid-Lachlan system to progress the replacement and upgrade of Woolshed, Wallamundry and Nerrathong weirs. <sup>3</sup>	WaterNSW DCCEEW – BCS
<b>Action 2.4:</b> Mitigate impacts to native fish	2.4.1 Progress the development of the NSW Diversion Screen Strategy.	DPIRD – Fisheries
<b>Action 2.5:</b> Review and evaluate the Lake Brewster Water Efficiency Project	2.5.1 Progress permanent repair works to sections of Lake Brewster to ensure reliability of water supply to the Lachlan River.	WaterNSW

2. Key Fish Habitats include aquatic habitats that are important to the sustainability of the recreational and commercial fishing industries, the maintenance of fish populations generally and the survival and recovery of threatened aquatic species. More information is available at: [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/species-protection/legislation-and-approvals/habitat/protecting-habitats](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/species-protection/legislation-and-approvals/habitat/protecting-habitats)

3. Currently under investigation by Lachlan Valley Water and supported by Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water – Biodiversity, Conservation and Science.

Action	Funded sub-actions	Lead
<b>Action 2.6:</b> Develop and enable place-based initiatives to deliver cultural outcomes for Aboriginal people	2.6.1 Continue to progress recommendations in the Australian Government's <i>Closing the Gap Report</i> and Local and Regional Voice Programs.	DCCEEW – Water
	2.6.2 Continue to work with the Lachlan Regional Aboriginal Water Committee to understand programs needed for their communities.	DCCEEW – Water
	2.6.3 Progress Priority 2 of the NSW Water Strategy, which commits to maintain and preserve water-related cultural sites and landscapes for Aboriginal people.	DCCEEW – Water
<b>Action 2.7:</b> Support the development and implementation of the Lachlan Valley Floodplain Management Plan and address floodplain structures	2.7.1 Finalise the Lachlan Valley Floodplain Management Plan by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing new hydraulic models</li> <li>• identifying existing flood works (approved and unapproved)</li> <li>• identifying flood-dependent ecological assets</li> <li>• identifying flood-dependent Aboriginal cultural assets and values and heritage sites.</li> </ul>	DCCEEW – Water
	2.7.2 Define an overall boundary for the floodplain and categorise the different areas within it into management zones.	DCCEEW – Water
	2.7.3 Cross-check depth and velocity of flood water in the models with existing floodway networks, aerial photography and river-gauge data of historical flood events, cultural values and environmental considerations to form the basis of the management zones.	DCCEEW – Water
	2.7.4 Undertake a comprehensive consultation process incorporating local expertise with formal public consultation and opportunities for property-scale feedback.	DCCEEW – Water
	2.7.7 Consider options to accelerate the process of bringing unapproved or noncompliant structures on floodplains in the Lachlan region, into compliance. This could include rolling out a program like the Improving Floodplain Connections Program <sup>4</sup> for the Lachlan region.	DCCEEW – Water

4. The Improving Floodplain Connections Program is being delivered in the Northern Basin. More information is available at: [water.dpie.nsw.gov.au/our-work/floodplain-management/improving-floodplain-connections-program](http://water.dpie.nsw.gov.au/our-work/floodplain-management/improving-floodplain-connections-program)

# Priority 3

## Support the water needs of a strong and sustainable economy

Action	Funded sub-actions	Lead
<b>Action 3.1:</b> Improve public access to climate information and water availability forecasts	3.1.1 Continue to update the Water Insights portal and information dashboards.	WaterNSW
	3.1.2 Continue to upload climate and flow data to the NSW Government's Sharing and Enabling Environmental Data portal, <sup>5</sup> including user guidance.	DCCEEW – Water
<b>Action 3.2 :</b> Investigate water use in the Lachlan region	3.2.1 Continue to enhance the understanding of potential future water supply and water availability risks through the climate datasets and updated modelling.	DCCEEW – Water
<b>Action 3.3:</b> Work with industries to better understand, mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change for water management	3.3.1 Continue to roll out the Farms of the Future Pilot Program.	DPIRD – Agriculture
	3.3.2 Monitor the outcomes of adoption of digital technologies under the Farms of the Future Program.	DPIRD – Agriculture
	3.3.4 Progress implementation of the NSW Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan. <sup>6</sup>	DCCEEW – Water
<b>Action 3.4:</b> Develop and enable employment and business opportunities for Aboriginal people	3.4.1 Continue to support development opportunities for Aboriginal businesses through a range of programs including the Regional Aboriginal Partnership Program. <sup>7</sup>	DPIRD – RAPO
	3.4.2 Support programs designed to enhance Aboriginal people's connection to Country and provide meaningful career pathways, including via the objectives outlined in the Local Land Services Aboriginal Engagement Strategy. <sup>8</sup>	DPIRD – LLS
	3.4.3 Support the development of the Local Land Services Aboriginal Employment Strategy. <sup>9</sup>	DPIRD – LLS

5. NSW Government, Sharing and Enabling Environmental Data in NSW, available at: [seed.nsw.gov.au](https://seed.nsw.gov.au)

6. More information is available at: [www.climatechange.environment.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-10/NSWClimateChangeAdaptationActionPlan2025-2029.pdf](https://www.climatechange.environment.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-10/NSWClimateChangeAdaptationActionPlan2025-2029.pdf)

7. More information is available at: [www.nsw.gov.au/regional-nsw/regional-aboriginal-partnerships-program](https://www.nsw.gov.au/regional-nsw/regional-aboriginal-partnerships-program)

8. More information is available at: [lls.nsw.gov.au/what-we-do/our-major-projects/aboriginal-ranger-program](https://lls.nsw.gov.au/what-we-do/our-major-projects/aboriginal-ranger-program)

9. More information is available at: [lls.nsw.gov.au/what-we-do/our-major-projects/aboriginal-ranger-program](https://lls.nsw.gov.au/what-we-do/our-major-projects/aboriginal-ranger-program)

Action	Funded sub-actions	Lead
<b>Action 3.5:</b> <b>Adopt a stronger focus on water efficiency and demand management</b>	<p>3.5.1 Continue working with priority councils in the region to deliver state-led and collaborative initiatives that support urban water efficiency, water conservation and demand management measures.</p> <p>These initiatives include applying the resources, tools and guidance developed under the NSW Water Efficiency and Regional Leakage Reduction Program<sup>10</sup> to implement best-practice water efficiency programs. The resources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NSW Water Efficiency Framework</li> <li>• water conservation cost-benefit analysis guidelines and catalogue of values</li> <li>• non-residential water efficiency programs handbook</li> <li>• best-practice guidelines for sporting fields</li> <li>• water-loss management training.</li> </ul>	DCCEEW – Water
<b>Action 3.6:</b> <b>Investigate ways to improve water reliability</b>	<p>3.6.1 Continue to consult with stakeholders to better understand where future investigations into water reliability should occur, including discussions with WaterNSW and the department to assess potential changes to the allocation framework within the Lachlan Regulated River, which would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the potential for better links with climate drivers</li> <li>• whether different allocation periods could be applied to different licence categories</li> <li>• the need to change reserve volumes based on a sequence of dry or wet years</li> <li>• a review of replenishment flow requirements for the Lower Lachlan.</li> </ul>	DCCEEW – Water

10. More information is available at: [water.dpie.nsw.gov.au/our-work/projects-and-programs/water-efficiency](http://water.dpie.nsw.gov.au/our-work/projects-and-programs/water-efficiency)

