



November 2022

South Coast What We Heard Report Aboriginal Cultural Snapshot



Our vision for the South Coast Regional Water Strategy is to support the delivery of healthy, reliable and resilient water resources for a liveable and prosperous region. To achieve this, we need to position the region so there is the right amount of water of the right quality available to people, Aboriginal communities, towns, industries and the environment.

Overview

One of the objectives of the regional water strategies is to recognise and protect Aboriginal Water rights, interests, and access to water.

Aboriginal community consultation workshops were held throughout the state in 12 regional areas of NSW. Workshops were delivered with independent regional Aboriginal Community Facilitators working in collaboration with the Department of Planning and Environment - Water, Regional Water Strategies.

Information provided within this snapshot describes all feedback received from Aboriginal community workshops held within the South Coast regional locations of Batemans Bay, Bega, and Wreck Bay.

Aboriginal Engagement Approach

There was strong support for improving the recognition of First Nations/Aboriginal People's water rights, interests and access to water for the South Coast region. The need to protect and maintain healthy waterways and ecosystems was important for many stakeholders.

The consultation and engagement program for the draft strategy highlighted a wide variety of views on a range of themes:

- Aboriginal Knowledge & Cultural Heritage
- Water Security
- Environmental & Ecosystem Health
- Climate change & data modelling
- Groundwater
- New and existing water infrastructure
- Entitlement reliability and risk management

Key Support

Key support relates directly to the legislative requirements for Water Management Act, currently under reform within NSW. Highlighted below are key support points recognised through the consultations with Aboriginal communities.

- There was an acknowledgement that genuine consultation with First Nations/Aboriginal People through this process can be an important step in providing a voice for First Nations/Aboriginal People in water matters.
- Integrating Aboriginal knowledge of water management and protection of cultural heritage, was supported.
- Creating employment for local First Nations/Aboriginal People, was supported.
- Support for establishing a regional Aboriginal water advisory committee, a regional cultural water officer employment program, a culturally appropriate water knowledge program and water-dependent cultural practice and site identification project.
- A whole of government approach to implementing options that establish programs involving First Nations/Aboriginal People was supported.

Next Steps

All Key support focus areas from all consultations with the Aboriginal communities of the South Coast have been incorporated into the priority actions of the South Coast Draft Strategy. Regional Water Strategies will continue Aboriginal Engagement Consultation during 2022.

Key Concerns

Key Concerns were also identified by the community.

- There was concern that there was not enough consultation with the First

Nations/Aboriginal People in the region. The department was encouraged to be more comprehensive in the subsequent public exhibition period for the strategy.

- Suggestions were made for options that support handing back land and waters to native title holders, to provide more focus on these issues.
- There was concern that engagement and consultation with the Aboriginal community needs to be ongoing, to facilitate trust-building and education of government representatives in culturally appropriate consultation.
- Water management (both fresh and saltwater), land management and fire management have to be considered holistically and not managed in silos.

Response to Feedback

Since the publication of the first draft South Coast Regional Water Strategy, the NSW Water Strategy has been further developed.

Some of the issues that the South Coast Regional Water Strategy highlighted and that were raised by communities in the South Coast region are challenges across the whole state.

These state-wide issues have been included as priority focus areas in the NSW Water Strategy. Your feedback has been used to refine the key challenges that we need to focus on in the final South Coast Regional Water Strategy, and the options that will be shortlisted for further investigation.

Further Consultation

We have heard and accepted feedback from across the state requesting more consultation on the regional water strategies, and a greater say in how options are shortlisted and prioritised.

The department remains committed to engaging with First Nations/Aboriginal People

in the region as we progress through the options assessment process, and the development of the final South Coast Regional Water Strategy and the NSW Aboriginal Water Strategy.

Unlike many other challenges in the region, the fundamental water rights of First Nations/Aboriginal People are still a major gap in water management across NSW.

Addressing this issue will set up a framework for addressing the Aboriginal community options identified in the draft regional water strategies. These options will be progressed through a NSW Aboriginal Water Strategy.

Opportunities to progress region-specific options for Aboriginal communities, in parallel with this state-level action, will be explored in the final South Coast Regional Water Strategy.

We will be undertaking public consultation on a shortlist of actions before the South Coast Regional Water Strategy is finalised.

Further Information

For more information regarding Aboriginal Communities & Water please see the DPIE Water webpage

[Engaging with Aboriginal Communities¹](#)

For any questions related to your region's water strategy for Public Exhibition and a

copy of the What We Heard Reports please use the link below

[Regional Public Exhibition²](#)

Webinar

Date: Tuesday 10th May 2022

Time: 12:30-2:30pm

Face to Face Consultation

Bega

Date: Tuesday 17th May 2022

Time: 10:am – 11:30am

Venue: Sapphire Coast Turf Club

1695 Sapphire Coast Drive

Wallagoot NSW 2550

Moruya

Wednesday 18th May 2022

10am -11:30am

Venue: Moruya Golf Club

Evans Street, Moruya NSW 2537

Wallaga Lake Aboriginal Community

Community Hall

Date: Monday 16th May

Time: 3:30pm to 4:30pm

Eden

Eden LALC

Cnr Bass & Calle Calle St Eden, NSW 2551

Time: 2:00pm to 4:00pm

For any other enquiries please email

regionalwater.strategies@dpi.e.nsw.gov.au

¹ <https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/plans-programs/regional-water-strategies/objectives-principles>

² <https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/plans-programs/regional-water-strategies/objectives-principles>