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Submission to Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy

Mudgee District Environment Group (MDEG), based in the Mid-Western Region local government area in NSW, is working for the conservation of our natural heritage and a sustainable future for our children.

Mudgee is situated on the Cudgegong River, a major regulated tributary of the Macquarie, in between Windamere Dam and Burrendong Dam.

The draft Regional Water Strategy notes that water security in the Cudgegong Valley is not threatened by future climate change predictions because of the rules managing water useage from Windamere Dam.

This is due to the 70,000 ML reserve storage that the Mudgee community lobbied hard to achieve.

It would be useful to take the same conservative approach to water releases from Burrendong Dam to ensure long term water security for the Macquarie River communities.

All major storages should have adequate reserve storage to supply critical human and critical industry needs. This will require a change to water sharing plan rules and modelling that informs water availability determinations.

MDEG strongly supports option 37: review of regulated river accounting and allocation process.

As part of this review, we recommend that the environmental allowance to be licensed in the Cudgegong is not socialised when it arrives in Burrendong Dam, but is maintained as environmental water allocation.

We also strongly support Option 24: Relieve flow restraints on the Cudgegong River at Rocky Waterhole Bridge. The raising of the bridge will allow for higher rates of release of

environmental allowance thus providing improved ecological outcomes, especially between Windamere Dam and Lawson Creek.

MDEG does not support the proposal to construct a reregulating weir at Gin Gin in the mid Macquarie River. This instream infrastructure will capture natural tributary inflows that provide important environmental benefits including natural breeding triggers, nutrients and carbon and better water temperature.

These flows are also critical to the health of the Macquarie Marshes and connectivity to the Barwon-Darling.

We note that the Government commitment is only to produce a business case for this project. We expect this exercise will be a waste of public funding that could have been better invested in more appropriate water management options.

MDEG also supports the options to better manage demand and to provide recognition to First Nations people cultural, social and employment needs.

Yours sincerely

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