



NSW DPI
Regional Water Strategy Team
By Email: regionalwater.strategies@dpi.nsw.gov.au

Draft Lachlan Regional Water Strategy

I submit the following brief comments as an individual with a long standing background in water planning, including as time as member of the Lachlan Water Sharing Plan Committee

Firstly, I welcome the move to articulate regional and state-wide strategies for NSW river systems. A comprehensive approach to management of water is much needed. Water is so much more than a commodity to be extracted for financial benefit.

Within the constraints of this draft for the Lachlan regional water strategy I comment:

Priority One: Build resilience to climate extremes

Noting the indications of increased variability of weather patterns as climate change bites deeper, business as usual is not an option.

Accordingly

- Records of historic rainfall must be updated to take in extremes of rainfall periods and modelling that takes account of climate change predictions up to most recent period, and factored in to guide predictions on the volumes of surface and ground water that can be sustainably extracted for cities and towns while also maintaining the health of the river system and sustaining industry.
- A profound re-think of how water is shared, including re-evaluation of the current 'averaging' approach in anticipation periods of greater unpredictability, is needed.
- Demand management and increased recycling will become increasingly important, noting that this is likely to require effective educational work to assist communities to appreciate the benefits

Priority Two: Ensure best use of existing water for the environment

As commented above, it is important to acknowledge the predictions of increased variability of weather patterns as climate change bites deeper.

Given the current major flooding in the Lachlan Valley it is important to note that even had the wall of the Wyangala Dam been raised this would not have mitigated downstream flooding since much of the inflow came from below dam tributaries.

Priority Three – support industry and community climate adaptation

An easily accessible pro-active outreach program to assist communities to understand and adapt to water and climate change including likely expectations on water availability should be instigated and well resourced.

Such a program should include understanding that groundwater is not an open ended unlimited resource to be further drawn on as a supplement surface water until and unless there is sufficient peer-reviewed research to demonstrate that it sustainable in any particular location.

Priority Four – improve our knowledge of water resources

Much more needs to be known about groundwater resources prior to any commitment to draw on these resources, let alone to rely on groundwater resources in extended dry periods.

There is also need for a pro-active approach to communicating the maintenance/restoration of river, wetland and floodplain health in accordance with the objects of Water Management Act 2000* as set out on the Water NSW website, ie.

to provide for the sustainable and integrated management of the water sources of the state for the benefit of both present and future generations and, in particular:

- Ecologically sustainable development
- Protect, enhance and restore water resources
- Recognise and foster social and economic benefits
- Recognise the role of the community
- Provide efficient and equitable sharing of water
- Management of water sources with other aspects of the environment including native vegetation and native fauna
- Encourage the sharing of responsibility and efficient use of water
- Encourage best practice management and use of water.

Along with improved knowledge of water resources there is a need to build a wider approach to managing water in the landscape. This should include consideration of catchment management, infrastructure, planning and natural resource utilisation as well as biodiversity conservation and community well-being. Recent years of protracted drought, major bushfires, and flooding – all exacerbated by human induced climate change – make it clear that all these are relevant in developing a water strategy for the long term. Overarching water strategies for a flourishing, healthy and sustainable Australian and NSW future go beyond the role of any one government agency.