



To Whom it May Concern,

Submission. Re: Draft Lachlan Regional Water Strategy

This submission is being lodged on behalf of ECCO, the Environmentally Concerned Citizens of Orange. Our organisation is a not-for-profit local group, and as such is concerned about the management of water in our region. We are advocates for the sustainable management of water in the Lachlan river system.

We thank you for the opportunity to comment on the current draft Regional Water Strategy.

One of the most important considerations for water management is the impact of climate change now and in the future. When planning for future climate outcomes it is important to acknowledge that modelling indicates lower rainfall, a higher rate of evaporation and less runoff flowing into existing storages. It is therefore important to assume that there will be less to go around when managing water demand.

It is important that we have an accurate assessment of all water resources within the Lachlan Catchment. The document does not provide this assessment beyond acknowledgement of the poor health of the Lachlan River. It is important that it is recognised that the current level of water allocation for extractive purposes is currently excessive and will be more so in the future if existing levels of extraction are maintained. There needs to be a commitment to extraction rates being consistent with climate science and the predictions of lower flows. There needs to be an acknowledgement that we need to move away from efforts to provide more water for extraction.

The raising of the Wyangala Dam wall is one of several options available for management of the Lachlan Catchment. It is presented in the draft document as a commitment. This is before due process has been followed including a proper environmental assessment. Nor has there been considered other available options to raising the wall. The result of raising the dam wall will be the capture of important natural flows that are vital for the health of the river downstream, and the wetlands which are essential for the survival of migratory birds.

ECCO strongly supports the initiatives mentioned in the document that will achieve improved outcomes for the health of the river system, which include fixing cold water pollution, infrastructure to improve fish movement, floodplain management and water quality. One option which needs to be included is that of improving connectivity to wetlands and waterbird breeding sites.

ECCO also strongly supports recommendations that improve the involvement of First Nations People and their employment in river management. We also commend the recognition of the significance of cultural knowledge and the water rights and interests of the First Nations People who identify culturally with the Lachlan river.

ECCO also supports suggested options for the reduction of water use by the communities that live along the river. These promote the main objective of the Lachlan Regional Water Strategy. We do not support projects that are the antithesis of sustainable water management which include raising the wall at Wyangala Dam, changes to Lake Cargelligo, and more weirs in the lower Lachlan. These strategies will only encourage more extraction in an already over extracted system.

There are hard times ahead. We must have a plan that acknowledges the challenges presented by future increased drought and higher temperatures. We need a plan that features adaptive, sustainable strategies that allow for appropriate water sharing for the environment, irrigation, farming, cultural and community use.

