

# Submission Questionnaire

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Draft Lachlan Regional Water Strategy - Submission Form



## Regional Water Strategies Public Exhibition Submission Questionnaire

*The NSW Government is taking action to improve the security, reliability, quality and resilience of the state's water resources. The Lachlan Regional Water Strategy will deliver healthy and resilient water resources for a liveable and prosperous regional NSW.*

This draft strategy is being developed by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and provides an opportunity to re-shape what we are doing in regional water management and chart a path forward.

We have been working with local water utilities, councils, communities, Aboriginal people and other stakeholders to ensure local and traditional knowledge informs the draft Lachlan Regional Water Strategy and that it serves the regional community, including Aboriginal people, the environment and industry.

### Your Voice is important

We have prepared this draft strategy to continue our discussions with you. We would like to hear your views on the draft strategy as a whole including the process we used to develop the strategy and the evidence that supports it. We are also seeking your feedback on the options presented in the draft strategy and whether you have any further information that could help us to assess the benefits and disadvantages of any of the options.

Please provide your feedback in the submission form below and email your completed submission to [regionalwater.strategies@dpie.nsw.gov.au](mailto:regionalwater.strategies@dpie.nsw.gov.au) or post to Regional Water Strategies, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124 by **13 November, 2020**.

The questionnaire includes general questions about the regional water strategy including objectives, vision, modelling, opportunities and challenges. It also includes questions regarding the draft options along with personal information questions.

The questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete and your response can remain anonymous if you wish (see question 1).

Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) require an answer.

If you have any questions about the questionnaire, please email:  
[regionalwater.strategies@dpie.nsw.gov.au](mailto:regionalwater.strategies@dpie.nsw.gov.au)

## Making your submission public

We collect information about you, which may include personal information, to assess submissions in response to the department's dealings and activities, and perform other functions required to complete the project. This information must be supplied. If you choose not to provide the requested information we may not be able to assess your submission.

To promote transparency and open government, we intend to make all submissions publicly available on our website, or in reports. Your name or your organisation's name may appear in these reports with your feedback attributed.

**If you would like your submission and/or feedback to be kept confidential, please let us know when making your submission.** You will be asked for your confidentiality preference at question 1.

If you request your submission be kept confidential, it will not be published on our website or included in any relevant reports, however it will still be subject to the *Government Information Public Access Act 2009*.

Your submission will be stored securely consistent with the department's Records Management Policy and you have the right to request access to, and correction of, your personal information held by the department.

Further details can be found in our privacy statement available on our website.  
<https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/privacy>

*Information from this form is collected for the purpose of receiving your feedback on the draft regional water strategy. The supply of this information is voluntary. Your details will be stored in NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment records. Information will be stored and managed in accordance with provisions under the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998. It will not be used for any other purpose and will not be given to any other third party except where required by law. To access or correct your personal information, contact us using the information at [dpie.nsw.gov.au/contact](https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/contact)*

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### 1. Information on confidentiality and privacy \*

I give my permission for my submission to be publicly available on the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment website.

Yes                  No

I would like my personal details to be kept confidential.

Yes                  No

## 2. Your details

Email address \*

Name \*

Address \*

Contact phone number \*

Do you identify as an Aboriginal person?

Yes

No

Are you an individual or representing an organisation?

Individual

Organisation

## 3. Organisation or business details

Who do you represent?

**Government:**

Commonwealth

New South Wales

State other

Local

**Local Water Utility**

**Peak representative organisation:**

Environment

Industry

Business group or business chamber

Community organisation

**Other**

## 4. Draft regional water strategy objectives and vision

The draft Lachlan Regional Water Strategy is one of 13 strategies (12 regional water strategies and a Greater Sydney Water Strategy) being developed by the department. All regional water strategies are being developed in line with the following objectives.

- **Deliver and manage water for local communities**
  - Improve water security, water quality and flood management for regional towns and communities.
- **Enable economic prosperity**
  - Improve water access reliability for regional industries.
- **Recognise and protect Aboriginal water rights, interests and access to water**
  - Including Aboriginal heritage assets.
- **Protect and enhance the environment**
  - Improve the health and integrity of environmental systems and assets, including by improving water quality.
- **Affordability**
  - Identify least cost policy and infrastructure options.

All draft regional water strategy options need to address at least one of the above objectives. Our vision for this strategy is to have healthy and resilient water resources (that withstand extreme events and adapt to these changes) for a liveable and prosperous Lachlan region.

To achieve this, we need to position the region so there is the right amount of water of the right quality, delivered in the right way to meet the future needs of Aboriginal people, towns, communities, industries and the environment.

**Do you support this vision for the Lachlan Regional Water Strategy?**

Yes

No

**If no, please outline your vision for the long term management of water resources in this region?**

## **5. Information and modelling used to develop the Lachlan Regional Water Strategy**

The draft Lachlan Regional Water Strategy packages the most up to date information and evidence with all the tools we have – policy, planning, behavioural, regulatory, technology and infrastructure solutions.

We have used the following information to develop the draft Lachlan Regional Water Strategy.

- **New climate data:**
  - Observed historical climate data - recorded rainfall, temperature and evaporation data.
  - Paleoclimate data - scientific reconstructed data using sources such as tree rings.
  - Climate drivers – key drivers of wet and dry periods.
- **Review of existing studies**
  - to identify drivers and risks for water resource management.
- **Community engagement:**
  - Local councils and joint council organisations.
  - Aboriginal peak bodies and Aboriginal community groups.
  - Review of previous water management consultations.

**A) Do you have any comments about the information used to develop this strategy?**

**B) Please provide details if there is additional information you think we should consider?**

## 6. Stochastic modelling method

We used a stochastic modelling method (based on the statistical characteristics of the new climate data) in order to get a dataset covering up to 10,000 years. This enables us to quantify the natural variability and extremes in the region with greater certainty.

**A) Do you have any comments about the modelling method used to develop this strategy?**

**B) Is there any additional information that you believe could help us assess the benefits and disadvantages of draft options?**

## 7. Opportunities and challenges for water management in the Lachlan region

During the Lachlan Regional Water Strategy drafting stage, the following opportunities, risks and challenges were identified.

- **Climate conditions place considerable stress on towns, communities, industries and ecosystems:**
  - Region has a naturally variable climate and modelling suggests periods between droughts could shorten.
  - Low inflows to Wyangala Dam.
  - Cowra and Forbes at a low risk of experiencing supply shortfalls.
  - Water security for towns and villages with single supply sources will be more challenging.
  - General security users could experience a decrease in average water availability.
  - Delivering water along the entire length of the Lachlan River will remain a challenge.
- **Review how we manage, use and deliver water to meet future challenges:**
  - Use new climate modelling to review water allocations and river operations.
  - Expansion in horticulture and mining developments is changing water use and demand patterns.
  - Growth is expected in the region's major centres.
  - Water reliability is critical to attract business and jobs.
- **Water is essential for Aboriginal people's health, wellbeing and connection to Country:**
  - Health of waterways impacts the wellbeing of the Traditional Owners and Custodians.
  - Provisions for accessing water for cultural purposes.
  - Improve Aboriginal people's involvement in water management.

- **Protecting critical environmental assets:**
  - Healthy water sources support the region’s environment.
  - The Lachlan catchment has significant wetlands and environmental assets.
  - The fish community is in poor health and some species are under threat.
  - Coordinated action and planning across the region should support environmental outcomes.
- **Better management of groundwater:**
  - Groundwater sources are critical for towns industries and ecosystems.
  - Groundwater levels in areas of concentrated use are in decline.
  - Sustainable access to groundwater resources by all water users.
  - More knowledge is needed about groundwater recharge rates.

**A) Do you have any comments on the opportunities, risks and challenges identified?**

**B) Are there any additional opportunities, risks and challenges that we should consider and what options could address these?**

## **8. Draft Lachlan Regional Water Strategy options**

We have developed a long list of options that could be included in the final Lachlan Regional Water Strategy. The options consider the opportunities and challenges facing the region and meet at least one regional water strategy objective.

The 48 options are grouped in different categories, being:

- Maintaining and diversifying water supplies.
- Protecting and enhancing natural ecosystems.
- Supporting water use efficiency and conservation.
- Strengthening community preparedness for climate extremes.
- Improving recognition of Aboriginal people’s water rights, interests and access to water.

Only feasible options will be progressed to the final strategy stage – following a rigorous assessment process. We are seeking your feedback to inform the options assessment process.

Draft options for the Lachlan Regional Water Strategy are outlined below.

### **Maintaining and diversifying water supplies**

1. Water transfer pipeline between Lake Rowlands and Carcoar Dam	6. Inter-regional connections project investigation
2. Wyangala Dam raising project	7. Water quality treatment works
3. Lake Rowlands augmentation	8. Managed aquifer recharge investigations and policy
4. Expansion to the piped town water supply system	9. Reuse, recycle and stormwater projects
5. Replacement and upgrade of existing pipelines	10. Reliable access to groundwater by towns

### **Protecting and enhancing natural ecosystems**

11. Cold water pollution mitigation measures	19. River Ranger Program
12. Environmental restoration works	20. Secure flows for water-dependent cultural sites
13. Improved management of wetlands on private land	21. Improved understanding of groundwater processes
14. NSW Fish Passage Strategy	22. Sustainable access to groundwater
15. Active management of flows	23. Improved clarity in managing groundwater resources sustainably
16. Water quality restoration works	
17. Floodplain management works	
18. Diversion screens to prevent fish extraction at pump offtakes	

### **Supporting water use and delivery efficiency**

24. Water efficiency projects (towns and industries)	28. Review of water trade in the Lachlan region
25. Lower Lachlan efficiency measures	29. Water pricing pilot study
26. Mid-Lachlan efficiency measures	30. Urban water restriction policy
27. Improvements to the storage effectiveness of Lake Cargelligo	31. The 'Sheet of Water' storage

### **Strengthening community preparedness for climate extremes**

32. Efficiency for drought security program	37. Training and information sharing programs: - new climate data / modelling - managing groundwater resources sustainably
33. Drought operation rules	
34. Review of water accounting and allocation process	38. Investigation to maintain amenity for regional towns during drought
35. Investigation of licence conversions	39. In-stream storage for the lower Lachlan
36. Improved data collection and storage	40. Land use change impact on water resources

## Improving recognition of Aboriginal people's water rights, interests and access to water

41. Culturally appropriate water knowledge program	45. Water portfolio project for Aboriginal communities
42. Water-dependent cultural practices and site identification project	46. Co-management investigation of Travelling Stock Reserves
43. Shared benefit project (environment and cultural outcomes)	47. Regional Aboriginal Water Advisory Committee
44. Aboriginal cultural water access licence review	48. Regional Cultural Water Officer employment program

### A) Which five (5) options do you think are ***most*** important?

Please list the option numbers in order of importance with the first option being most important

Option Number

Option Number

Option Number

Option Number

Option Number

### B) Please comment on why you think these options are most important?

### C) Which five (5) options do you think are ***least*** important (if any)?

Please list the option numbers in order of least importance with the first option being least important

Option Number

Option Number

Option Number

Option Number

Option Number

### D) Please comment on why you think these options are least important?

### E) Do you have any comments on the draft options?

## **9. Option combinations**

The option list provided in the draft strategy also identifies potential combinations of options. These combinations recognise that most options require associated works, further assessments and/or legislative, policy and planning changes to ensure they address the risks and challenges identified in the Lachlan region and do not have unintended impacts.

**A) Do you have any thoughts on how the options could be combined with other options?**

**B) Are there additional options that we should consider?**

## **10. Other comments**

**Do you have any other comments about the Lachlan Regional Water Strategy?**

## **11. How did you hear about the public exhibition of this strategy?**

We are interested to know how you heard about the opportunity to make a submission. Please indicate the communication methods below:

Newspaper

Radio

Department of Planning, Industry and Environment website

Direct email

Social media

Have your say NSW Government website

Communication from peak body

Other

## **12. Additional Information and submission process**

If you would like to provide any supporting documents to help us understand your view, please either, email these from the same email you provided in this form, or attach supporting documents to this form if you are returning your submission by mail.

All submissions on the draft Lachlan Regional Water Strategy will be reviewed following the public exhibition period. Further targeted engagement will be undertaken along with the final phase of stakeholder engagement later in the year to review the final documents.



**Please email your completed submission and supporting documents to [regionalwater.strategies@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:regionalwater.strategies@dpi.nsw.gov.au)**



**or post to Regional Water Strategies, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124 by 13 November, 2020.**



Further details on all regional water strategies can be found on our website <https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/regional-water-strategies>

**Thank you for your submission.**

**Extracted answers from fillable form above:**

Question 8E.

The draft options do not address the poor health of the catchment and particularly the catchment above Wyangala Dam and the Lachlan tributaries above Boorowa. The current strategies of the current Local Land Services Regions and the former Lachlan Catchment Management Authority are NOT addressed. The poor health of the catchment is contributing to siltation of the river system, flooding, poor water quality, higher water treatment costs for town and irrigation users and also impact of fish breeding and therefore recreation within the river system.



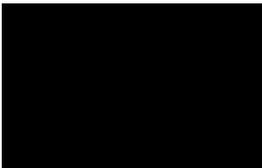
South East  
**Landcare**



Letter of support to Hovells Creek Landcare

South East Landcare fully supports Landcare's involvement in purposeful collaboration with the Lachlan Draft Water Strategy stakeholders. The complexity of this proposed project requires that all perspectives be listened to, understood, and included in these deliberations. I am sure that through its' connection with community in the Upper Lachlan that Landcare will bring a rich diversity of views to the table for this necessary discussion.

Yours sincerely,



Response to the Draft Regional Water Strategy for the Lachlan

[https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/324514/draft-rws-lachlan.pdf](https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/324514/draft-rws-lachlan.pdf)

Comments / Responses due by 13 November 2020 via

Web: [www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/lachlanregional-water-strategy](http://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/lachlanregional-water-strategy)

Email: regionalwater.strategies@dpie.nsw.gov.au

#### Draft Response

This draft regional water strategy for the Lachlan is surprising – for the key issues which it does not address, rather than the potential impact on water availability and allocation in the Lachlan which it does address.

#### The Health of the Catchment

Critical to the supply of water into Wyangala Dam and into the Lachlan River system generally is the health of the catchment, and both the quantity and quality of water emanating from that catchment.

The strategy acknowledges that the fish community of the Lachlan is in poor health, and this is indicative that the biological health of the catchment and river system generally is also in poor health.

Another key indicator of the poor health of the catchment is the sediment load within the river system and the turbidity (sand, silt, salt and biological material load) of water flowing into Wyangala Dam and the river system generally. For example:

- NSW Fisheries for Central Tablelands LLS have identified a 150 kilometre sand and silt slug in the river between Wyangala and Forbes, filling all deeper reaches of the river and fish breeding habitat, ie the river has become a drain.
- Upper Lachlan Council has recently cleared a three-meter-deep sand slug from the low-level road crossing across the Lachlan River at Bevendale, above Wyangala.
- In 2019 the Hilltops Council spent weeks removing many truckloads of sand, silt and organic debris from creek crossings and table drains along the Hovells Creek valley.

The soil erosion problem in the Lachlan catchment is well known to NSW Government. It was comprehensively addressed by the former Lachlan Catchment Management Authority in its Catchment Management Plan (2013 – 2023) and in detail in Support Chapter 1 (the Lachlan Tablelands) to that Plan. It is addressed again in the South East Local Land Services Strategic Plan. Both documents are available to Water NSW on-line through Local Land Services.

The soil erosion problem in our Hovells Creek Catchment was clearly identified in the 2005 Boorowa / Hovells Creek Catchment Action Plan <<https://hovellscreeklancare.org.au/resources/boorowa-catchment-action-plan-2005-2010>>. The health / condition of the Boorowa and Hovells Creek catchments are important as the respective streams deposit turbid water and sediment into the Lachlan downstream from Wyangala, which is not now flushed out of the river bed onto the adjacent floodplains by flood waters now controlled by the dam – Catch 22.

Catchment health in the Lachlan has a historical context dating right back to the earliest days of European settlement when NSW Government legislation and policies required settlers to clear (and over clear) their blocks to retain their rights to occupancy.

River health and water quality is not just about blue green algae, it is also about the turbidity of the water, the silt load and its chemical composition, i.e. salt load. This is a real issue for town councils and irrigators.

The size of the catchment cannot be increased, the rainfall in an uncertain climatic environment cannot be pre-determined, but the health of the catchment and its yield of clean water can be managed and improved (by government in collaboration with landowners). The Sydney water catchments, now managed by Water NSW, and the Snowy catchments are testament to this.

The impact of catchment health on peak flows, and floods in the river system e.g. at Reid's Flat, also warrant further investigation in Regional Strategy context. Farmers know that paddocks in good condition with good ground cover slow storm water flows into farm dams and replenish ground water reserves.

The draft strategy identifies a number of key environmental assets within the basin. With respect, it has neglected a critical asset, ie the catchment itself, which is the source of water for ALL other assets, including population centers within the basin. This critical environmental asset needs to be respected and protected.

#### Consultation with key Stakeholders

Community engagement for the draft plan targeted local government councils, local water utilities, joint organisations, Aboriginal people and their peak bodies. A total of 29 meetings were held, with over 86 people attending and participating in discussions. The review panel also included representatives from the agriculture and fisheries sections of the Department of Primary Industries.

The focus of these consultations has been on aboriginal groups (justifiably) and on consumers of water, i.e. groups who buy water from Water NSW. There are many inherent conflicts of interest in this narrow band of consultation, i.e. 'we want access to more water for our economic development' is the key message in the draft strategy.

However, consultation to date has been limited. There are many others within the Lachlan community with a stake, or key interest, in water collection, distribution and use who have not been consulted. These include:

Farmers, aboriginal communities and wildlife enthusiasts - The draft recognises that the Lachlan catchment is the only catchment in NSW with nationally important wetlands, swamps and important environmental assets across its entire length, including Lake Cowal near Forbes, Lake Brewster, the Booligal wetlands and the Great Cumbung Swamp in the Lower Lachlan. These wetlands provide important feeding habitat for migratory waterbirds and contain one of the largest reed swamps in the Murray-Darling Basin. The lower Lachlan is also an important grazing and fattening region for NSW farmers. In effect these people / natural assets bear much of the cost for water extraction up stream for the benefit of townspeople, miners and irrigators.

Farmers and smaller lifestyle landholders in the upper catchment – These constituents manage the health and welfare of critical lifeblood of the Lachlan water system. Their rights to harvest and retain water which falls on or flows across their properties is currently restricted, and there are hints of further restrictions within this strategy document. They also include the landholders whose properties will be flooded by the proposed extension of Wyangala Dam. These constituents currently already bear, or will soon bear, much of the cost of downstream water supply for the for the benefit of townspeople, miners and irrigators.

Landcare Groups, local farmer representative bodies and environment / conservation groups – These groups, including ourselves, either represent or organise our community to address key environmental, production, lifestyle, community welfare or 'public benefit' issues of local concern – and this includes this regional water strategy for the Lachlan and the proposal to extend Wyangala Dam. We coordinate local / regional weed control, feral animal control, erosion control, rehabilitation of habitat for rare and endangered species, promote sustainable land management and act as a conduit for our members to access the latest research and technology information. In this instance we are also holding a public body, i.e. Water NSW, to professional account.

Fisher persons, travellers, water sports and other recreational users – This grouping includes all the passive users or beneficiaries of the water resources of the Lachlan, and whose interest is only indirectly addressed within the draft strategy under a 'tourism' heading. However, their interest in a healthy and vibrant river system is not confined to overnight stays in local towns, but also for example for recreational bike riders, in the roads and the landscape amenity of the region.

In conclusion

Water is the lifeblood of the Lachlan River system. It is the fourth largest river system in NSW. It is also the most comprehensive, and includes nationally significant environmental assets, including the Lake Cowal-Wilbertroy Wetlands, the Booligal Wetlands and the Great Cumbung Swamp.

There are increasing demands for water in the catchment from local government wanting to grow their towns, from irrigation farmers wanting more reliable supplies of water and from miners needing water for mineral processing.

However, the catchment is not getting any bigger, the climate predictions suggest changes in rainfall patterns and increasing rainfall uncertainty all of which leaves catchment health and its ability to yield quality supplies as one of the only, and perhaps, the key determinate, of water yield factors in the catchment water equation (noting that there are other efficiency of water distribution and use factors on the water use side of the equation). We do not believe catchment health and management has been adequately addressed in the draft strategy. In particular, the role of a counterpart NSW Government agency, Local Land Services, is not addressed, nor is the key role of catchment landholders, and catchment community groups such as Landcare.

In this response, we have not addressed water distribution nor water use efficiency, also key issues which should be more comprehensively addressed within this strategy.

The Landcare focus is on the health of our environment and on sustainable land use, which includes water. As a key regional community network, we are happy to collaborate with Water NSW on the next phase of the development of this important regional water strategy. We do believe however that much more attention needs to be given to the health of the catchment, its rehabilitation and long-term care.

Recommendation

The draft strategy includes significant capital works including the proposed Wyangala Dam upgrade @ \$650million, a Cowra to Young pipeline and a Lachlan to Orange pipeline. Given the significance of this (billion) dollar investment, we recommend that the strategy also include a \$10 million each year for ten years investment in rehabilitation of the health of the Lachlan catchment.

Hovells Creek Landcare + Others

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South East  
**Landcare**