



Draft Greater Sydney Water Strategy Focus Area	Blacktown City Council feedback
<p>Priority 1</p> <p>Servicing a growing population</p>	<p>We strongly support the water cycle management initiatives defined by Infrastructure NSW to address urban heat in western Sydney into the future. All councils and Sydney Water need to actively incorporate Water Cycle Management into the planning and construction of our new suburbs going forward.</p> <p>This incorporates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • capturing water where it lands, e.g. storing it in the soil – re-establishing wetlands and using it to promote vegetation and increased tree canopy/canopy cover to limit the impacts of urban heat • modifying our development control plans (DCP's) and other engineering guidelines to be able to capture and manage the more intense rainfall • modifying our DCP's and engineering standards to facilitate and sustain wider verges and more street trees with increased canopy that are more drought tolerant. <p>Planning new release areas and associated development and engineering standards that promote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accommodation of longer droughts and more intense storms • promote the retention and use of stormwater locally to facilitate more vegetation, more tree canopy and limit urban heat • facilitate new urban areas with a network of cooling green spaces to limit the impacts of urban heat • ensuring that our new urban areas are flood resilient – above the flood level and capable of being evacuated • Development Control Plans that guide and support developers and service providers.
<p>Recycled water</p>	<p>We support the use of recycled water in industrial, open space and residential areas. We have constructed a number of landmark recycled water projects that have offset over 50,000kl/yr of normal potable water supply. These projects are not financially sustainable without assistance from the NSW Government.</p>
<p>Integrated water strategies</p>	<p>Blacktown City Council continues to demonstrate industry leadership in the application of integrated water strategies and approaches. The Strategy does not identify how government will work with councils, like Blacktown City in this regard. Councils are larger users of water and it would be short-sighted to not consider and recognise the importance of councils and their water strategies in this broader Strategy.</p>

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Putting water at the heart of our city and communities	We support that ‘we need to make our city cooler and greener, and maintain healthy waterways and ecosystems’. However, to provide these benefits, additional blue-green assets e.g. Water sensitive urban design (WSUD) and irrigation infrastructure, are required. Such council assets need additional funding and resources.
Cooler cities	We currently only irrigate sporting fields and high-profile gardens. If the NSW Government is serious about increasing the use of recycled and stormwater for cooling benefits, it needs to increase funding for these assets (e.g. tanks and irrigation systems) and make recycled water (when available) much cheaper or free as it is providing a community benefit.
Diversify supply sources	<p>We support ‘Make more use of local water sources such as stormwater and recycling’; for the purpose of irrigation and internal building use for example, however, more detail is required from the NSW Government as to how it will work with local government to make this a reality.</p> <p>We categorically do not support the proposition for the use of ‘purified recycled water’ for drinking purposes in the western Sydney area. Our Council and community do not support.</p> <p>While this practice is in place internationally, there is a perception that western Sydney residents are habitually treated differently to residents in the eastern half of Sydney by NSW and Australian governments.</p>
Delivering for the community	Councils are one of the main delivery organisations that have a strong community connection. This Strategy needs to emphasise how government will work with councils to deliver the desired outcomes such as ‘water makes places liveable’.
Priority 2 A strong focus on water conservation and efficiency	<p>We support programs that educate our community on water conservation and especially assist our industrial and commercial business in the Blacktown City.</p> <p>The Blacktown City is the largest council area in NSW and the fourth largest industrial and manufacturing areas in Australia (by GDP). Hence we are a major water consumer.</p>
Plan for new infrastructure with a focus on rainfall-independent supply	We support the use of recycled water, but we absolutely do not support purified recycled water for drinking water. The focus needs to be on making recycled water available for productive uses such as industry and non-potable uses and open space irrigation.
Priority 3 Our city is green and liveable	We support all approaches in this priority to provide cool, green, and more liveable areas. One of the main limitations for councils is to deliver on the NSW Premier’s priority of green infrastructure. A lack of funding for tree planting and riparian restoration is a major barrier.

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	<p>We consider this an essential service (as does our community) that assists towards a greening and liveable city. Currently these services cannot be funded by contribution plans, and we believe this should be reviewed.</p>
<p>Prioritise alternative water sources for greening and cooling</p>	<p>The Strategy mentions the use of stormwater as a water source to reduce pressure on potable water supplies but does not provide any way of increasing councils' ability to provide this service. Harvested stormwater can be a sustainable alternative water supply that can be used during water restrictions, to provide waterway health outcomes and for urban cooling.</p> <p>The NSW Government should encourage councils to harvest and use more stormwater by means of increased funding availability for capital works.</p>
<p>Progress a circular economy approach for water services</p>	<p>We strongly support the establishment of a Western Sydney Bioresource Hub. We are currently working with Sydney Water as a participant in the University of Sydney's project to map the organic waste streams and their disposal paths across Blacktown and Penrith's local government areas. This will ultimately assist in the improved management of these waste streams but also to identify alternate approaches to a circular economy.</p> <p>We are also pursuing an alternate fuel agenda for our fleet together with other WSROC members, and so access to green hydrogen and fertiliser products for open space use from the Proposed Bioresource Hub would also be supported.</p> <p>We support the 'Expanded non-potable recycled water Services'. Our residents in growth areas and our parks need recycled water to provide a cooler environment.</p>
<p>Case Study: Rosemeadow Demonstration Project</p>	<p>We support this type of project and use of space, however, the current funding available for these assets as part of precinct contribution plans does not allow for delivery of such assets. Also, the additional funding required to maintain these assets is potentially significantly higher than current 'business as usual' approaches.</p>

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<p>Priority 4</p> <p>Our waterways and landscapes are healthy</p>	<p>We agree with this priority, however there is one main issue missing on the challenges for waterway health, which is inconsistent ownership.</p> <p>Issues with governance was listed which we agree on, however, there is no mention how waterway ownership, particularly in growth areas, is fragmented between the NSW Government, local government and private land owners. This will lead to confusion and impact riparian vegetation as many private owners do not have the financial capacity to effectively maintain these areas.</p> <p>Currently many councils are not taking ownership of riparian areas and waterways in major growth areas due to the financial burden they carry. If the NSW Government is requesting greater riparian protection, it needs to allow councils to purchase and rehabilitate waterways in growth areas by allowing them to be funded by the precinct contribution plans. Blacktown City currently has approximately 20% of its 262 km waterways in private ownership.</p>
<p>Maintain and improve ecosystem health</p>	<p>In principle we support the use of 'The Risk-based Framework', however, before formally adopting it we need to be shown:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how it will impact our current precinct contribution plans • what assets are required to meet the objectives • what the full life cycle implications will be and how they will be funded.
<p>Review of the Greater Sydney Water Sharing Plan</p>	<p>We support review of the Water Sharing Plan as the current plan requires councils that harvest stormwater to acquire a licence and purchase limited unit shares.</p> <p>Urban areas generate too much stormwater, and councils should not be punished by having to apply for licences and fund unit shares, when we are trying to provide a community benefit and work towards many of the desired outcomes in this Strategy.</p>
<p>Invest in wastewater management</p>	<p>We support the reduction in wet and dry weather overflows that have an impact on waterway health. Sydney Water has been actively completing projects in the Parramatta River catchment however this should be consistent across the whole City and not just catchment specific.</p>
<p>Improve stormwater management</p>	<p>Improved stormwater management is supported, however funding for maintenance of stormwater assets has not been mentioned. The growth areas, in particular, are requiring significant investment in Water sensitive urban design assets to improve water quality, but there is limited funding available for ongoing maintenance and asset replacement.</p>

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	<p>One of the main issues with lack of funding is that the Stormwater service charge available to councils has not increased since 2006 (still \$25/property). This charge should be increased so that councils can provide a level of service our community expects. The fact that the charge is not indexed means that the funding provided by the charge is significantly less than when the charge first introduced. In the same period, Sydney Water's stormwater charge has increased from \$25 to \$80 per property.</p>
Protect water for recreation	<p>The Strategy identifies improved management of the discharge of urban stormwater to our urban rivers, bays and harbours including Sydney Harbour, by strengthening oversight, coordination, compliance and enforcement activities'.</p> <p>We support this, and as far as we are aware, we are the only council in NSW that has a Water sensitive urban design compliance program for privately owned assets. This type of compliance is critical to capitalise on the investment in these assets.</p> <p>We also believe sediment and erosion control compliance should be a significant focus to minimise sediments impacting waterway health, particularly during the construction phase of development.</p>
Access to Prospect Reservoir is crucial for the Blacktown City Council Community as a green space	<p>We request that pedestrian and cycle connections to and around Prospect Reservoir be provided. We call for this connection to be incorporated into the new Metropolitan Strategy.</p> <p>There is a critical need for connection to and integration with the Western Sydney Parklands, the suburbs of Seven Hills and Blacktown, and implementation of Cumberland Council's masterplan for the corridor from Reservoir to Potts Hill. It has been identified that the provision of a pedestrian and cycle connection overhead bridge from Prospect Highway / Reconciliation Road is required to reconnect the lower canal and Reserve.</p> <p>We support use of Prospect Reservoir for non-motorised water-based recreation.</p>
Priority 5 Water management and services meet community needs	<p>We strongly support the 'Water management supports Aboriginal rights, interests and access'.</p> <p>Blacktown City has the largest urban population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Inlanders in NSW and we are happy to work with the NSW Government to further improve how we manage water to support this initiative in a meaningful way.</p>

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Funding and water pricing to BCC's community	<p>We also support increased consultation with our community on water supply options and pricing.</p> <p>Many residents in our community are facing financial hardship, and any cost of living reductions that can be made will assist those in need.</p> <p>To ensure financial sustainability of Council, any increase in the costs of provision of water, stormwater or integrated water infrastructure must be allowed for by IPART in setting the rate peg for Blacktown City Council.</p>