

## Draft NSW Water Strategy submission form

The NSW Water Strategy will be the first 20-year water strategy for all of NSW. It will provide a blueprint to help us tackle the key challenges and opportunities for water management across the state.

For more information about the strategy or to download a copy of the strategy, please visit [dpie.nsw.gov.au/nswwaterstrategy](https://dpie.nsw.gov.au/nswwaterstrategy).

### Your voice is important

We would like to hear your views on the draft strategy, including whether you think it identifies the right priorities, challenges, opportunities and actions.

Please provide your feedback in the submission form below and email your completed submission to [nsw.waterstrategy@dpie.nsw.gov.au](mailto:nsw.waterstrategy@dpie.nsw.gov.au) or post to NSW Water Strategy, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124 **by 28 March, 2021**.

The form 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 making a submission, please email:

[nsw.waterstrategy@dpie.nsw.gov.au](mailto:nsw.waterstrategy@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 to 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, unless you have chosen to remain anonymous.

**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If you request that your submission be kept confidential, it will not be published on our website or included in any relevant reports.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.

[industry.nsw.gov.au/privacy](https://industry.nsw.gov.au/privacy)

## 1. Information on confidentiality and privacy\*

I give permission for my submission to be made 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

Name\*

Contact phone number\*

Postcode\*

Email address\*

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 Please specify
- Peak representative organisation Please specify
- Local Water Utility
- Other (please specify) Byron Environment Centre



## 4. Draft vision

The NSW Government has developed the draft NSW Water Strategy as part of a suite of long-term strategies to maintain the resilience of the state's water services and resources over the coming decades.

*The proposed vision for the draft NSW Water Strategy is sustainable water resources for thriving people, places and ecosystems, both now and for future generations.*

### Which aspects of water management are most important to you and your local community?

To provide environmentally responsible & sustainable water supplies to the Far North Coast Region. Water resilience must be achieved by diversification of supply: utilising groundwater supplies sustainably; stormwater harvesting; direct & indirect rainwater harvesting; a focus on purified water recycling; system-wide water efficiency and sustainable desalination used as a back up.

To protect Aboriginal water rights, interests & cultural values, including protection of their cultural assets from destruction by dam building.

Expand water sources that are independent of rainwater/dams that damage threatened flora and fauna. There is an urgent need educate the public about the importance of a diverse range of supply strategies, particularly the implementation of purified recycled water technology. There are many myths and misinformation about these processes in the community, which stymies progress in community acceptance.

### Do you support the proposed vision for the draft NSW Water Strategy?

- Yes  
 No

### Please tell us more about your response:

The Byron Environment Centre (BEC) totally agrees that due to Climate Change, there will be higher temperatures, longer droughts and less reliable rainfall in the future. We need to plan ahead now for this.  
We agree with the statement on pg. 21 of the draft NSW Water Strategy that:  
"we need to reduce our reliance on traditional climate dependent water sources to supply our towns, cities and industry,"  
We strongly support the statements on pg. 27 that we must:  
"Be open to innovative approaches and new technologies; Expand rainfall independent water sources;  
Adopt recycling for supply augmentation." Research & development of new technologies and construction of recycling plants must begin immediately to provide purified recycled water, especially in areas of high population growth such as the Far North Coast of NSW.

## 5. Draft objectives

The draft NSW Water Strategy sets high level objectives and principles to guide water service delivery and resource management across NSW. We have identified six core objectives which underpin the draft strategy. These are based on the *Water Management Act 2000*. They are:

- protecting public health and safety
- liveable and vibrant towns and cities
- water sources, floodplains and ecosystems protected
- cultural values respected and protected
- orderly, fair and equitable sharing of water
- contribute to a strong economy.

### Which objectives are most important to you?

Please rank the objectives from most important to least important (where 1 is most important and 6 is least important).

- 1 Protecting public health and safety
- 5 Liveable and vibrant towns and cities
- 2 Water sources, floodplains and ecosystems protected
- 3 Cultural values respected and protected
- 4 Orderly, fair and equitable sharing of water
- 6 Contribute to a strong economy

### Do you have any comments on any of the proposed objectives?

Dams are highly destructive to waterways, ecosystems and species in the dam footprint and new dams should no longer be considered as sustainable sources of water. New dams that destroy Aboriginal heritage should not be considered as a water source .eg the Dunoon Dam at the Channon Gorge in Northern NSW.



## 6. Draft guiding principles

The draft strategy also proposes seven principles to guide the long-term strategic planning for water resource management in NSW. These principles work in tandem with the draft objectives to guide development and implementation of actions.

The guiding principles are:

- healthy environments sustain social and economic outcomes
- water is a limited (although recyclable) resource
- systems thinking to optimise outcomes
- data-enabled planning and decision-making
- transparency and accountability to engender community trust
- forward thinking to build preparedness and resilience
- giving effect to Aboriginal rights and access to water.

### Which principles are most important to you?

Please rank the objectives from most important to least important (where 1 is most important and 7 is least important).

- 1 Healthy environments sustain social and economic outcomes
- 3 Water is a limited (although recyclable) resource
- 4 Systems thinking to optimise outcomes
- 7 Data-enabled planning and decision-making
- 5 Transparency and accountability to engender community trust
- 6 Forward thinking to build preparedness and resilience
- 2 Giving effect to Aboriginal rights and access to water

### Do you have any comments on any of the guiding principles?

No 1: Preservation of endangered plant & animal species, especially Koalas & Platypus, must be a priority which prevents dam building in sensitive areas. Australia cannot afford to lose any more populations of these threatened species.  
No.2: Important Aboriginal sacred sites are an equal priority for preservation along with threatened species.  
No. 3: Stormwater harvesting, direct and indirect purified recycled water, and sustainable desalination, are all supply options which need to be available as choices for local supply authorities, with the active support of the DPIE.  
We endorse the high level approaches outlined (pg. 27 of draft NSW Water Strategy) to :  
Expand rainfall independent water sources.  
Adopt recycling for supply augmentation.  
We strongly support Proactive support for water utilities to diversify sources of water (pg.121) , including managed aquifer recharge (pg.122)

## 7. Opportunities, challenges and actions for improved state-wide water management

The draft NSW Water Strategy outlines seven strategic priorities for action, focused on meeting the core objectives based on the *NSW Water Management Act 2000*. These strategic priorities are:

1. Build community confidence and capacity through engagement, transparency and accountability
2. Recognise Aboriginal rights and values, and increase access to and ownership of water for cultural and economic purposes
3. Improve river, floodplain and aquifer ecosystem health, and system connectivity
4. Increase resilience to changes in water availability (variability and climate change)
5. Support economic growth and resilient industries within a capped system
6. Support resilient, prosperous and liveable cities and towns
7. Enable a future focused, capable and innovative water sector.

Under each priority the draft strategy identifies several opportunities and challenges, and a total of 41 proposed actions to improve water management across the state.

### Do you have any comments on the seven strategic priorities identified?

The Byron Environment Centre believes that the DPIE must support the following changes:  
System change, through DPIE support for local authorities to change practices and through DPIE removal of regulatory barriers to cost effective water reuse,  
Priority No. 1 should include community education on diversity of water supply.  
No.4: Water security, through DPIE funding of research and development for and of diversified supply sources.  
DPIE recommending to local authorities and funding new technology, both for non-rainfall sources, eg desalination, purified recycled water, and for water efficiency.  
No 4: We strongly endorse the use of "Worst Case Senarios (pg. 86) in modelling and planning for the water security of our future generations.

### Do you have any comments on any of the proposed actions identified?

Priority 2: We strongly Support all of the following actions from 2.1 to 2.6.  
In particular we support the following actions with changes to wording of actions in brackets:  
2.2: The Government will ensure existing water governance and decision-making processes provide for First Nations representation, including through identified First Nations roles on relevant boards and committees. (Add the word "Councils" after "boards" & fast track this action.)  
2.6: The Government will ensure that regional and metropolitan water strategies appropriately consider cultural heritage in assessing infrastructure, policy and planning options in each region. (The wording of "appropriately consider" needs to be changed to "prioritise" cultural heritage etc.)  
Priority 3: Action 3.6: We support sustainable Groundwater management as essential. It supplies an important water source in combination with other sources.

### Are there any additional opportunities, risks and challenges that should be considered in the draft strategy?

There must be a policy that no dams are built in areas where threatened plant communities or species are located or where threatened animal habitats occur. We cannot risk extinction of species when there are alternative supply sources.  
The BEC believes that public programs for water literacy must be resourced and fast-tracked. Education programs need to cover: the impacts of climate change on water; system wide water efficiencies; processes of purified recycled water and desalination; new ways to harvest water from multiple rooftops & stormwater and managed aquifer recharge. An uneducated public poses a risk to the implementation of these processes. This is a challenge that must be addressed.  
Future planning laws to include stormwater harvesting in new residential and commercial subdivisions is an opportunity for water security. This should be included in the strategy.  
The final say on whether Aboriginal heritage can be impacted by dams etc, must be given to Aboriginal representatives, either in the community or on decision making boards.  
Australia cannot risk the impacts of destroying Aboriginal heritage.



## What actions should be prioritised for immediate implementation and how should they be implemented?

The Byron Environment Centre believes it is imperative to have significant investment & support by the DPIE in & for:  
System change, through support for local authorities to change practices and through removal of regulatory barriers to cost effective water reuse.  
Water security, through DPIE funded research and development for and of diversified sources, both for non-rainfall sources such as desalination, recycled water, and for water efficiency. Construction of recycling plants by local water authorities must begin.  
Public education programs: There is an urgent need to increase informed engagement and decision-making.  
Misinformation is a barrier to water security. Rural water utilities have limited capacity to increase water literacy.  
DPIE to make mandatory that Aboriginal representatives have roles on boards, local Councils and committees where water decisions are made that effect Aboriginal Heritage sites and Indigenous Cultural practices.

## 8. Other comments

### Do you have any other comments on the draft NSW Water Strategy?

Stormwater harvesting and water reuse must be prioritised by the DPIE in this strategy. DPIE to recommend that LGAs make this a mandatory requirement in new subdivisions.  
The DPIE needs to resource and implement effective water literacy education programs that cover:  
The underlying issues and science about water sustainability.  
A wide range of sustainable supply options beyond traditional strategies.  
The impacts of climate change on water resilience.  
Strategies for households, industry and communities to become more efficient in water use.  
Promotion of water catchment for households and industries.

## 9. How did you hear about the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft NSW Water Strategy?

Please select all that apply from the list below:

- Newspaper
- Radio
- Department of Planning, Industry and Environment website
- Direct email
- Social media
- Have your say NSW website
- Word of mouth
- Other (please describe)

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