

Submission Questionnaire



Draft North Coast Regional Water Strategy –
Submission Form

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If you request your submission be kept confidential, it will not be published on our website or included in any relevant reports, however it will still be subject to the *Government Information Public Access Act 2009*.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

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

*REFER ATTACHED SUBMISSION QUESTION 1
(AND NOTES BELOW)*

2. Your details

Email address*

[Redacted]

Name*

[Redacted]

Address*

[Redacted]

Contact phone number*

[Redacted]

Do you identify as an Aboriginal person?

Yes No

Are you making this submission as an individual or as a representative of an organisation?*

Individual Organisation

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3. Organisation or business details

Who do you represent?

- Government (please specify)
 Commonwealth New South Wales State other Local
- Local Water Utility
- Peak representative organisation (please specify)
 Environment Industry
 Business group or business chamber Community organisation
- Other (please specify)

4. Draft regional water strategy objectives and vision

The draft North Coast 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 North Coast 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 the proposed vision for the North Coast Regional Water Strategy?

- Yes No

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

SEE ATTACHED ~~AT~~ SUBMISSION
'QUESTION 4'

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5. Information and modelling used to develop the North Coast Regional Water Strategy

The draft North Coast 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 North Coast 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?

SEE ATTACHED SUBMISSION
'QUESTION 5'

B. Please provide details if there is additional information you think we should also consider.

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6. Stochastic modelling method

We used a stochastic modelling method (this is a method that uses the characteristics of the climate data to generate long term, extended datasets) 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?

*SBR ATTACHED SUBMISSION
'QUESTION 6'*

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 North Coast region

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

- Minimal **water infrastructure** to capture, store or divert flows
 - All rivers are unregulated and the region has six independent river catchments
 - Local councils source town water directly from the region's rivers, upriver alluvial or coastal sands groundwater sources
 - Many councils are investigating new or additional local storages
 - Sea level rise and saline intrusion is an additional risk to future town water security
- Rivers are under **high hydrological stress** and affected by poor water quality
 - Shifts towards intensive horticulture have changed the demand for water placing further stress on waterways
 - New climate modelling shows that the annual volume of water flowing in rivers may reduce by around 24%
 - Water quality ratings for major rivers vary from fair to very poor

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- Maintaining a **healthy riverine and estuarine environment** is important for ecosystem diversity and a strong economy
 - Nearly 40% of the region is protected within National Parks and the natural assets are the key attractions for visitors with tourism rated as the second highest valued industry
 - In 2018/19 the commercial estuarine industries for the North Coast was worth around \$17 million
- Greater knowledge and information for **groundwater** sustainability
 - Groundwater is found in fractured and porous rocks, coastal sands and alluvial aquifers around rivers and creeks
 - Limited data on groundwater use
 - Groundwater sources have been impacted by saline intrusion most likely linked to changes induced by groundwater extraction
- Land and waters of the North Coast region is deeply significant for **Aboriginal people**
 - Access to water and Country is key to supporting social, cultural and spiritual needs
 - Aboriginal people are concerned about the impact of extraction and land uses on river flows and water quality
 - Opportunities to include Aboriginal people's involvement in water management
- Opportunities to improve how we **manage and use water**
 - Improve data collection to ensure resources are managed sustainably
 - Existing infrastructure is fit for purpose so that towns, communities and industry have secure water supplies
 - Protect and bring back critical riverine habitats and species
 - Review and clarify rules and procedures to those who need to follow them
 - Provide transparency and confidence to water users
 - Support more flexible water access arrangements
 - Encourage innovation in how we collect water data and encourage more efficient water use
 - Build capacity to support water stewardship and local decision making
 - Support further research to understand risks of the region's water resources

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

SEE ATTACHED SUBMISSION
'QUESTION 7'

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

8. Draft North Coast Regional Water Strategy options

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

The 36 options are grouped in different categories, being:

- Maintaining and diversifying water supplies
- Protecting and enhancing natural ecosystems
- Supporting water use efficiency and conservation

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.

Maintaining and diversifying water supplies

1. Expand the Clarence-Coffs Harbour Regional Water Supply Scheme	9. Protecting coastal groundwater resources for town water supplies and rural water users
2. Portable desalination	10. Remove impediments to water reuse projects
3. Emergency water supply provided by new pumped hydro storage projects	11. Increase use of recycled waste water for intensive horticulture
4. Augment Shannon Creek Dam	12. Indirect potable reuse of purified recycled water
5. Upgrade major town water treatment facilities	13. Direct potable reuse of purified recycled water
6. Repurpose existing assets to provide emergency storage for local industries	14. Increased harvestable rights
7. Vulnerability of surface water supplies to sea level rise and saline intrusion	15. Increased on-farm water storage
8. New industry and rural licence category within major council storages	

Protecting and enhancing natural ecosystems

16. Establish sustainable extraction limits for North Coast surface water and groundwater sources	23. Fish-friendly water extraction
17. Convert low-flow water access licences to high-flow water access licences	24. Improve fish passage in the North Coast region

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Protecting and enhancing natural ecosystems

18. Long-term water plans to support healthy coastal waterways	25. Addressing cold water pollution
19. Characterising coastal groundwater resources	26. Coastal, regional focused water reference groups
20. Protecting ecosystems that depend on coastal groundwater resources	27. Planning for climate change impacts on coastal groundwater resources
21. Improve stormwater management and estuarine habits	28. River Recovery Program for the North Coast: a region-wide program of instream works, riparian vegetation and sediment control
22. Bringing back riverine and estuarine habitats and threatened species	

Supporting water use efficiency and water conservation

29. Improved data collection on water use and patterns	33. Regional network efficiency audit
30. Active and effective water markets	34. Regional capacity building program and skills hub
31. Apply the NSW Extreme Events Policy to the North Coast region	35. Support for local councils to lift performance standards
32. Regional demand management program	36. Regional framework to manage restrictions for non-urban water users of town water

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

Please list the option numbers in order of importance with one (1) being the most important

1. Option number
2. Option number
3. Option number
4. Option number
5. Option number

B. Please comment on why you think these options are most important.

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

Please list the option numbers in order of least importance with one (1) being the least important

- 1. Option number
- 2. Option number
- 3. Option number
- 4. Option number
- 5. Option number

D. Please comment on why you think these options are least important.

E. Do you have any other comments on the draft options?

*SEE ATTACHED SUBMISSION
'QUESTION 8'*

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 North Coast region and do not have unintended impacts.

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

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B. Are there any additional options that we should consider?

SEE ATTACHED SUBMISSION
'QUESTION 9'

10. Other comments

Do you have any other comments about the North Coast 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 website
- Communication from peak body
- Word of mouth
- Other (please describe)