

What We Heard Summary

South Coast Region Draft Regional Water Strategy

December 2021



The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment is developing 12 regional water strategies to provide long-term tailored water management solutions for NSW's regional communities.

A comprehensive consultation program accompanied the release of the draft strategy. The **What We Heard** report summarises the key issues we heard during the public exhibition. It highlights how your feedback has informed the next steps in developing the South Coast Regional Water Strategy. This consultation summary contains highlights of the [What We Heard](#) report.

We received a range of feedback on the draft strategy, including the individual proposed options. The following themes emerged during this consultation:



Aboriginal knowledge and connection to Country

There was broad support for improving the recognition of First Nations/Aboriginal People's water rights, interests and access to water. Water-related programs that consider social and economic benefits, as well as provide employment, were encouraged.



Water Security

Water security was raised as a concern in the feedback. There was support for increased water efficiency in the local agricultural industries, as well as support for monitoring of water extraction. Concern was raised regarding wastewater being pumped to the ocean and missed opportunities to treat wastewater for appropriate uses.



Environmental and ecosystem health

There was focus in the feedback on support for the river and ecosystem health, through restoration of unhindered natural flows. Concerns were raised about the impacts from rising sea levels and coastal erosion.



Climate change and data modelling

Stakeholders were pleased that the draft strategy acknowledged climate change and its impact. There was support for the data modelling and its future use in decision-making. Stakeholders also recognised and supported the regional water strategy taking action to manage climate change risks.



Read the full [What We Heard](#) report at:
www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/regional-water-strategies

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Our Response

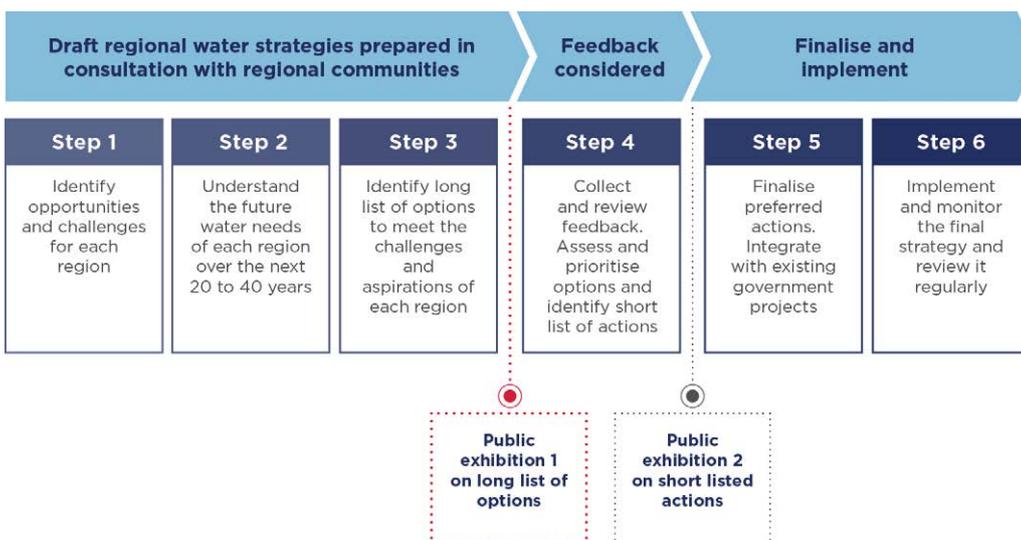
Your feedback has been used to refine the key challenges that we need to focus on in the final South Coast Regional Water Strategy, and the options that will be shortlisted for further investigation. The NSW Water Strategy addresses issues raised in the feedback that are consistent across the state.

Our detailed response, set out in the draft South Coast Regional Water Strategy **What We Heard** Report, includes the following:

- The climate and data modelling will be used to review water allocation frameworks and water sharing plan provisions in response to extremes in water availability, and in assessing the long-term water security of individual towns.
- Opportunities to progress region-specific Aboriginal community options will be identified in parallel with state-level actions.
- Climate modelling will be used to assess impacts and associated risks to groundwater, along with state-wide actions for sustainable groundwater management, via the NSW Groundwater Strategy.
- Opportunities will be considered to integrate land use and water management earlier and more strategically through the planning system.
- Adopting a more intense, state-wide focus on improving water quality through the definition of clear roles, accountabilities and frameworks for monitoring, assessing and addressing water quality risks across the state (NSW Water Strategy Action 3.5).
- Water infrastructure projects have been assessed for the short list of actions via a tailored cost-benefit analysis.

We will be undertaking a second round of public consultation on the short listed actions before the South Coast Regional Water Strategy is finalised.

The draft South Coast Regional Water Strategy was on public exhibition from 30 October - 13 December 2020. The development process for these regional water strategies is illustrated in the diagram below.



Engagement at a glance

 **1,476**

unique website page visits

 **12**

formal submissions

 **2**

public information sessions

8 attendees

 **3**

Aboriginal community sessions

17 attendees

 **1**

live webinar

9 attendees