

What we heard summary

Namoi Draft Regional Water Strategy

September 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 Namoi 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 various options.

The following themes emerged during this consultation:



Water security

There was widespread support to provide small communities with water security for their wellbeing, with stakeholders also calling for water security for productive use. Stakeholders also sought to link the provision of infrastructure to water security as a hedge against climate change.



Groundwater management and quality

Groundwater was an important area of discussion for the region given the region heavily relies on groundwater. Water users noted the importance of groundwater as a (largely) weather independent and reliable source of water in drier times. As a result, stakeholders expressed that an improved understanding of groundwater quality could help inform appropriate use of water and identify risks and impacts on the environment and groundwater-dependent ecosystems.



First Nations / Aboriginal water rights, interests and access

There was broad support for the inclusion of First Nations / Aboriginal rights, interests and access to water as an objective of the strategy. Stakeholders suggested there should be greater recognition of First Nations / Aboriginal people's cultural and spiritual connection to water, including their cultural imperative to protect water for the environment and future generations.



Climate conditions and change

There is very strong support for options that address climate change, with options addressing water accounting and allocations, data collection and sustainable access to groundwater receiving the strongest support. However, support for maintaining amenity in regional towns was less well supported.



Ecosystems, river health and connectivity

Many comments focused on the protection and rehabilitation of ecosystems, river health and connectivity. Restoring connectivity was crucial in supporting ecosystems and improving riverine productivity, water quality, native fish populations and other aquatic species, as well as offering significant cultural, social and recreational benefits.



Sustainable allocation and water sharing

The sustainable allocation of water and water sharing was deemed a critical issue that should be addressed by the strategy. This stemmed from concern that water is over allocated and extracted in the region. Irrigators expressed concerns that Water Sharing Plans could be amended.

Our Response

Your feedback has been used to refine and focus the Namoi 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 Namoi Regional Water Strategy **What we heard** report, includes the following:

- There is an opportunity to work with the community to detail how *new climate datasets* should be used. Data will be made available to local water utilities and stakeholders to help assess long-term water security in individual towns.
- Opportunities to progress region-specific *Aboriginal community options*, in parallel with state-level actions, will be explored in the final Namoi Regional Water Strategy.
- *Environmental health and connectivity* across basins has been included as a priority in the NSW Water Strategy (Action 3.7).
- There is an opportunity to consider *integrating land use and water management* earlier and more strategically through the planning system. Improving water quality is also a focus of the NSW Water Strategy (Action 3.5).
- Opportunities to progress region-specific *groundwater options* in addition to state-level actions will be explored in the final Namoi Regional Water Strategy.

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

The draft Namoi Regional Water Strategy was on public exhibition from 3 March – 16 May 2021. The development process for these regional water strategies is illustrated in the diagram below.



Engagement at a glance

 **872**

unique website page visits

 **39**

formal submissions

 **5**

public information sessions

35 attendees



4 Aboriginal

community sessions

35 attendees



1 live webinar

17 attendees