

Carrathool Shire Council

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Regional Water Strategies
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
12 Darcey Street
PARRAMATTA NSW 2150

Dear Sir/Madam

DRAFT REGIONAL WATER STRATEGY – LACHLAN RIVER

Council wishes to provide the following feedback with regard to the Lachlan River Water Strategy.

It is acknowledged climate variability plays a role in the challenges to communities and industry reliant on water from the Lachlan River.

Strong opinions are held within the Shire that storage is an issue and while some proposals are in place to raise the height of the wall at the Wyangala dam there needs to be greater ability to store water along the system which would further drought proof the river. Recently large amounts of local water have flowed past our towns and industry to end up in a swamp where it evaporated. This water could be put to productive use or provide a source of supply for water to be shared with other stakeholders.

It is correct the water does not enter the Murrumbidgee through the Great Cumbung Swamp unless there is major flooding across the river systems. The river empties into a swamp not a recognised wetland, there is a question of the need for environmental flows and do man made flows do additional damage than normal flood flows.

Council believes there should be greater accountability for the outcomes on the use of environmental water. While a sound case is provided to allocate the water for this purpose it appears little review is provided on the results of these river flows. A review is needed of the soundness of current environmental practises and results of environmental water along the Lachlan System.

Hillston is a small town within Carrathool Shire and is located on the banks of the Lachlan River. The town relies on irrigation water for much of its economic activity and employment is directly correlated to the availability of water from the Lachlan River. Recent years have seen a downturn in economic activity resulting in loss of town population and a reduction of services to the community. For many people this necessitates travel to Griffith over an hour away by car and no public transport is available.

Page 72 of the draft report states "secure and resilient water supplies support a growing population and contribute to the liveability, amenity and wellbeing of residents and visitors". Town lakes and other water bodies can also provide an escape from hardship associated with the drought. Council has for many years been an advocate of these facts however it is still

unable to use water for this purpose but watch it flow downriver to evaporate. This needs attention and recognition under the proposed strategy. To this end options 38 and 39 are fully supported.

Groundwater is also a concern, it is accepted groundwater reliance may be placed on surface water should the allocation of groundwater be reduced. Town water utilities within the Shire are groundwater based, it is evident that the quality of water would appear to be diminishing and Council may seek use of surface water for town supplies placing further demand on the Lachlan River system. Again, the need for additional storage facilities along the lower reaches of the river.

Council recognises the connection of Aboriginal people along the river to the water for cultural purposes. It believes that with the current allocation of water virtually fully subscribed any water made available should come from environmental water or through additional water made available through increased storage. Such water allocations should not be tradeable but used for the specific purposes provided.

The following are considerations that need to be rectified or added to the document:

- Page 11, Figure 1, Map of the Lachlan region – The addition of the Location of Hillston to the map will put more perspective to the map.
- Page 55, Figure 16, Map of groundwater sources in the Lachlan region.
- Again, the addition of Hillston will give greater perspective to the map.
- Page 73, Carrathool Shire does not include the town of Lake Cargelligo.

Improvements can be made to water use and sharing of this resource however it should not be as a ~~reduction~~ in current user entitlement.

