

**Tamworth Water  
Security Alliance**



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**SUBMISSION  
Draft Namoi Regional Water Strategy**

Tamworth Water Security Alliance represents community groups and individuals who support cost effective, diverse and sustainable water supply options for Tamworth Regional Council.

We welcome the opportunity to provide comment on the draft Namoi Regional Water Strategy ('the draft Strategy') and congratulate the NSW Government for developing a comprehensive overview of the challenges facing our community in the context of climate change predictions.

The draft Strategy has a commitment to progressing a detailed business case for a new Dungowan Dam & Pipeline and planning delivery of the project under a 'fast-tracked' assessment process.

We do not support this approach. A new dam proposal should be an option treated in the same manner as all other infrastructure options in the draft Strategy. This allows for more considered investment decision-making to arrive at the best suite of cost-effective solutions to regional water supply over the next 40 years.

The Dungowan Dam is highly likely to be an unviable proposition and will not meet the draft Strategy objective of affordability. There are a number of information sources that highlight this issue:

1. Australian Productivity Commission<sup>1</sup>:
  - Any further increases in construction cost would likely result in the project becoming unviable.
  - the cost of securing Tamworth's water supply by directly purchasing general security entitlements is estimated at just 2 per cent of the Dungowan Dam construction cost
2. DPIE Capital Works Summary<sup>2</sup>
  - Estimated total cost now forecast \$470 - \$870 million
3. NSW Premier<sup>3</sup>
  - 'The costs are likely to be far more significant than we envisaged and the engineering challenges far more significant than we envisaged.'

Tamworth Water Security Alliance supports that the \$480 million committed to a new dam at Dungowan should be better invested in a range of more sustainable options presented in the draft Strategy.

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<sup>1</sup> Productivity Commission, February 2021. Draft Report National Water Reform 2020

<sup>2</sup> DPIE November 2020 Capital Works Summary final draft. Obtained through Parliamentary Papers.

<sup>3</sup> Budget Estimates, March 2020

We recommend that the final Namoi Regional Water Strategy takes a more considered approach to water planning in the region by concentrating on cost-effective projects that will deliver more water security with less environmental, social and cultural impacts than a new dam.

It is also imperative that the final business case for the Dungowan Dam & Pipeline proposal is publicly released before any further investment decisions are made.

Tamworth Water Security Alliance strongly supports that funding allocated to a new dam be redistributed to more cost effective and secure projects such as an advanced purified recycled water system for Tamworth Regional Council water supply.

Investment in community education and pilot programs to demonstrate the safety and security of advanced purified recycled water across the region would be a good first step.

We note that a recent survey to understand people's knowledge, behaviours and attitudes to the potential future use of recycled water was undertaken by Namoi Unlimited.<sup>4</sup> The survey found that 55% of respondents currently use recycled water at their house for purposes such as watering the garden, flushing toilets and washing cars; 80% of the survey participants would use treated recycled water if it was provided by council and were happy for council to adopt it for their use.

Tamworth Water Security Alliance strongly supports investment in the following options:

- Option 5: Advance water treatment technologies for towns
- Option 6: Reuse, recycle and storm water projects
- Option 10: Dual water systems for towns
- Option 14: Water security for small communities
- Option 31: Water efficiency projects (towns and industries)
- Option 35: Implement Great Artesian Basin Strategic Management Plan
- Option 36: New drought operational rules (Namoi and Peel rivers)

An additional option should be industry investment in more efficient irrigation technology and a reduction in evaporation from on-farm storages. This would decrease water demand for agriculture and provide more long-term security for all water users.

The health of Namoi and Peel Rivers is poor and health of native fish populations is very poor. The groundwater sources are stressed and depleted. Climate change predictions are for a change in rainfall patterns, less rainfall overall, higher temperatures and higher evaporation rates, longer droughts and more short intense droughts.

Current water management and water use in the Namoi Region must be significantly altered so that future generations have access to a secure water supply and a river system that can support native wildlife and cultural values.

Yours sincerely



On behalf of  
Tamworth Water Security Alliance

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<sup>4</sup> Nucleo 2020, *Campaign Report: Namoi Unlimited*, Namoi Unlimited