

Submission Questionnaire

Draft Gwydir Regional Water Strategy - Submission Form



Regional Water Strategies Public Exhibition Submission Questionnaire

The NSW Government is taking action to improve the security, reliability, quality and resilience of the state's water resources. The Gwydir Regional Water Strategy will deliver healthy and resilient water resources for a liveable and prosperous regional NSW.

This draft strategy is being developed by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and provides an opportunity to re-shape what we are doing in regional water management and chart a path forward.

We have been working with local water utilities, councils, communities, Aboriginal people and other stakeholders to ensure local and traditional knowledge informs the draft Gwydir Regional Water Strategy and that it serves the regional community, including Aboriginal people, the environment and industry.

Your Voice is important

We have prepared this draft strategy to continue our discussions with you. We would like to hear your views on the draft strategy as a whole including the process we used to develop the strategy and the evidence that supports it. We are also seeking your feedback on the options presented in the draft strategy and whether you have any further information that could help us to assess the benefits and disadvantages of any of the options.

Please provide your feedback in the submission form below and email your completed submission to regionalwater.strategies@dpie.nsw.gov.au or post to Regional Water Strategies, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124 by **13 November, 2020**.

The questionnaire includes general questions about the regional water strategy including objectives, vision, modelling, opportunities and challenges. It also includes questions regarding the draft options along with personal information questions.

The questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete and your response can remain anonymous if you wish (see question 1).

Questions marked with an asterisk (*) require an answer.

If you have any questions about the questionnaire, please email:
regionalwater.strategies@dpie.nsw.gov.au

Making your submission public

We collect information about you, which may include personal information, to assess submissions in response to the department's dealings and activities, and perform other functions required to complete the project. This information must be supplied. If you choose not to provide the requested information we may not be able to assess your submission.

To promote transparency and open government, we intend to make all submissions publicly available on our website, or in reports. Your name or your organisation's name may appear in these reports with your feedback attributed.

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>

Information from this form is collected for the purpose of receiving your feedback on the draft regional water strategy. The supply of this information is voluntary. Your details will be stored in NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment records. Information will be stored and managed in accordance with provisions under the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998. It will not be used for any other purpose and will not be given to any other third party except where required by law. To access or correct your personal information, contact us using the information at dpie.nsw.gov.au/contact

1. Information on confidentiality and privacy *

I give my permission for my submission to be 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

2. Your details

Email address *

Name *

Address *

Contact phone number *

Do you identify as an Aboriginal person?

Yes

No

Are you an individual or representing an organisation?

Individual

Organisation

3. Organisation or business details

Who do you represent?

Government:

Commonwealth

New South Wales

State other

Local

Local Water Utility

Peak representative organisation:

Environment

Industry

Business group or business chamber

Community organisation

Other

Individual

4. Draft regional water strategy objectives and vision

The draft Gwydir 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 Gwydir 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 this vision for the Gwydir Regional Water Strategy?



Yes



No

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

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

The draft Gwydir 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 Gwydir 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?

In regard to the Gwydir Regional Water Strategy, there has been a lack of consultation with the local community and key stakeholders who are part of the farming community. There has also been a lack of consultation with local government.

B) Please provide details if there is additional information you think we should consider?

There needs to be consideration to new and improved farming practices. Ground cover management to combat erosion which in turn reduces run off into the Gwydir River system.

Consideration must also be given to increased water use efficiency by irrigators in the Gwydir Valley.

- **Protecting critical environmental assets:**
 - Healthy water sources support the region's environment.
 - Water set aside for the environment has helped to maintain the fish community.
 - Management of environmental water in unregulated rivers.
 - Gwydir wetlands are a significant Aboriginal cultural site.
- **Better management of groundwater:**
 - Groundwater sources are critical for towns industries and ecosystems.
 - Declining aquifer levels in some areas.
 - More efficient and equitable use of groundwater.
 - More knowledge is needed about groundwater recharge rates.

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

The construction of a new dam will not necessarily mean more water and increased water security, especially with the increased frequency and length of droughts combined with the projected increase of Moree's population over the next 20 years.

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

There is a risk that Option 2 (being the construction of a new dam) will be neither cost-effective or feasible over the next 20 years, as per page 84 of the draft. This risk flows from a lack of stakeholder acceptance (and engagement), time to implement the option and a low likelihood of a cost-effective outcome.

8. Draft Gwydir Regional Water Strategy options

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

The 40 options are grouped in different categories, being:

- maintaining and diversifying water supplies.
- protecting and enhancing natural ecosystems.
- supporting water use and delivery efficiency and water conservation.
- strengthening community preparedness for climate extremes.
- improving recognition of Aboriginal people's water rights, interests and access to water.

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.

Draft options for the Gwydir Regional Water Strategy are outlined below.

Maintaining and diversifying water supplies

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Enlargement of Tareelaroi Weir | 5. Reliable access to groundwater by towns |
| 2. New Lower Gravesend Dam on the Gwydir River downstream of Warialda Creek | 6. Townwater security planning and investment for Bingara |
| 3. Reuse, recycling and stormwater projects | 7. Town water security planning and investment for Uralla Shire |
| 4. Managed aquifer recharge investigation and policy | 8. Reliable access to groundwater for the Moree Special Activation Precinct |

Protecting and enhancing natural ecosystems

- | | |
|---|---|
| 9. Removal of system constraints in the Gwydir catchment to improve flows reaching the Gwydir Wetland | 16. Improved clarity in managing groundwater resources sustainably |
| 10. NSW Fish Passage Strategy | 17. Active management to share flows between consumptive and other uses |
| 11. Ability to direct excess supplementary flows | 18. Modification and / or removal of floodwork structures causing adverse impacts |
| 12. Cold water pollution migration measures | 19. River Ranger program |
| 13. Diversion screens to prevent fish extraction at pump offtakes | 20. Investigation of water quality mitigation measures |
| 14. Improved understanding of groundwater processes | 21. Secure flows for water-dependent cultural sites |
| 15. Sustainable access to groundwater by all users | |

Supporting water use and delivery efficiency

- | | |
|--|---|
| 22. Water efficiency projects (towns and industry) | 25. Review urban water restriction policy |
| 23. Review of water markets in the Gwydir region | 26. Addressing inefficient delivery system management |
| 24. Connectivity with downstream systems | |

Strengthening community preparedness for climate extremes

- | | |
|---|---|
| 27. New drought operational rules (Gwydir River) | 31. Education and capacity building program
- new climate data/modelling
- managing groundwater resources sustainably |
| 28. Review of surface water accounting and allocation process | |
| 29. Investigation of licence conversions | 32. Land use change impact on water resources |
| 30. Improved data collection and information sharing | |

Improving recognition of Aboriginal people's water rights, interests and access to water

33. Culturally appropriate water knowledge program	37. Regional Aboriginal Water Advisory Committee
34. Water-dependent cultural practices and site identification project	38. Water portfolio project for Aboriginal communities
35. Shared benefit project (environment and cultural outcomes)	39. Co-management investigation of Travelling Stock Reserves
36. Regional Cultural Water Officer employment program	40. Aboriginal cultural water access licence review

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

Please list the option numbers in order of importance with the first option being most important

Option Number 9
Option Number 3
Option Number 25
Option Number 29
Option Number 22

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

Copeton Dam is already over allocated. Run off into the catchment area will be less in a dryer climate and better farming practices will reduce erosion. Options to reduce and recycle what we have must be considered. If the climate is to get hotter, evaporation will also rise putting another stress on the Copeton Dam. The enlargement of Tareelaro Weir will result in an immediate increase of water in the system. The above options are feasible because they are cost - efficient and likely to deliver on achievable outcomes

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

Please list the option numbers in order of least importance with the first option being least important

Option Number 2
Option Number 1
Option Number 21
Option Number 6
Option Number 31

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

The Gwydir River needs to continue to flow. We already have a very large dam in Copeton. If we add or increase constraints within the system it will be detrimental to the cultural necessities of Aboriginal communities and also threaten the existence of our previous native environment.
Option 2 will be at great expense and only have shallow water storage, resulting in greater evaporation.

E) Do you have any comments on the draft options?

6. Stochastic modelling method

We used a stochastic modelling method (based on the statistical characteristics of the new climate data) 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?

Because of the inherent randomness of Stochastic modelling it would not be suitable to use when planning water infrastructure, which should be based on an empirical fact based model. Any given scenario projected by the Stochastic model may not necessarily eventuate.

B) Is there any additional information that you believe could help us assess the benefits and disadvantages of draft options?

Option 2 will only deliver minimal (if any) benefit to the system, as it is not feasible in terms of stakeholder acceptance, implementation time and cost - efficiency.

7. Opportunities and challenges for water management in the Gwydir region

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

- **Climate conditions place considerable stress on towns, communities, industries and ecosystems:**
 - Region moves between wet and dry period and droughts will be more frequent.
 - Record low inflows to Copeton Dam.
 - Towns and villages on single supply sources will have future water security challenges.
 - Average annual extraction for some water users could decline.
 - Large on-farm storages experience high evaporation losses.
- **Review how we manage, use and deliver water to meet future challenges:**
 - Use new climate modelling to review water allocations and river operations.
 - Managing floodplain harvesting to protect environmental and cultural assets.
 - Moree is expected to grow over the next 20 years.
 - Water reliability is critical to attract business and jobs.
- **Water is essential for Aboriginal people's health, wellbeing and connection to Country:**
 - Health of waterways impacts the wellbeing of the Traditional Owners and Custodians.
 - Provisions for accessing water for cultural purposes.
 - Improve Aboriginal people's involvement in water management.

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 Gwydir region and do not have unintended impacts.

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

Option 9: Removal of system constraints in the Gwydir catchment to improve flows reaching the Gwydir Wetlands could be combined with Option 21: Secure flows for water - dependent cultural sites. Also Option 3: Reuse, recycling and stormwater projects could be combined with Option 25: Review urban water restriction policy.

B) Are there additional options that we should consider?

An increase in the capacity of Copeton Dam.

10. Other comments

Do you have any other comments about the Gwydir Regional Water Strategy?

There needs to be better consultation with local government, community and agricultural stakeholders. There also needs to be a better assessment on feasibility and cost efficiency.

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 Government website
- Communication from peak body
- Other

Neighbour

12. Additional Information and submission process

If you would like to provide any supporting documents to help us understand your view, please either, email these from the same email you provided in this form, or attach supporting documents to this form if you are returning your submission by mail.

All submissions on the draft Gwydir Regional Water Strategy will be reviewed following the public exhibition period. Further targeted engagement will be undertaken along with the final phase of stakeholder engagement later in the year to review the final documents.



Please email your completed submission and supporting documents to regionalwater.strategies@dpie.nsw.gov.au



or post to Regional Water Strategies, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124 by 13 November, 2020.



Further details on all regional water strategies can be found on our website <https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/regional-water-strategies>

Thank you for your submission.