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Subject: Greater Sydney Water Strategy survey - Council's comments
Date: Thursday, 4 November 2021 5:37:28 PM
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Hello,

Sutherland Shire Council is grateful for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Department of Planning Industry and Environment's Draft Greater Sydney Water Strategy (the strategy), and hopes similar opportunities are extended for future documents, particularly in relation to implementation stages. Securing Greater Sydney's water supply, in response to a changing climate and predicted increases in the frequency, intensity and duration of droughts, will be a difficult and challenging task. Council acknowledges the need for rainfall independent sources of water to bring Sydney in line with other global cities and to secure an enduring supply into the future.

Council is supportive of the strategy in principle, however would like to see more tangible details for crucial aspects of the proposed rainfall independent strategies. Further information is required, particularly around the location of purified waste water schemes, the preferred water treatment option, associated infrastructure, and their impacts on receiving environments prior to any implementation.

Sutherland Shire Council welcomes the strategy's plans to implement rainfall independent strategies to maintain green spaces and tree canopies within the urban landscape, and adopt an integrated water cycle management methodology, linking water and land use planning. Council shares the notion of improved stormwater management to protect and maintain waterways and ecosystem health and welcomes the NSW Government's plan to investment in waste water management. Recognising and protecting Aboriginal rights, interest and access to water within Greater Sydney is consistent with Sutherland Shire Council's Cultural Strategy, therefore its priority within the strategy is supported.

The use of purified waste water and desalination plants appear to be the only truly rainfall independent supply options presented in the strategy. The process of purified waste water seems to sit within its own self-perpetuating cycle, where its output is governed by the amount of water people use. During water restrictions and extreme droughts the amount of water available for purification will be less, therefore water from desalination plants will be needed to maintain an enduring supply. Purified waste water has "lower capital and operating costs" and has a "lower carbon footprint" compared to desalination, which is great, but it seems it will be invariably linked with desalination during times of drought, potentially rendering these statements inaccurate. Purified waste water also carries the heavy burden of negative perception which will require careful management, including educational campaigns. At this stage, people throughout the broader Sydney Basin have not been truly challenged with this reality, so doubt remains. Council is interested in the idea of a demonstration plant to address this perception and provide education for the community, however information about the plants location is a missed opportunity for the strategy. Council is interested in the notion of purified water being transferred for release at various environmental buffers and used as a source of environmental flow, but would need further information around key aspects of the proposal to offer full support.

The strategy outlines how Sydney Water has identified nine possible schemes for purified waste water, one being a demonstration plant, but no other information is provided. The location, size, intended receiving environments and recycling methods proposed for these schemes would have been welcomed information. How can you gauge a communities honest reaction without all the details provided? If details cannot be provided at the present time, then Council reaffirms its earlier request to allow further comments on the strategy before it moves into the implementation stages. As a whole, the strategy offers very little information regarding the intended disposal of waste generated from purified waste water treatment facilities, or what treatment process will be preferred. If reverse osmosis is the preferred treatment method, then issues remain about the disposal of the chemicals used to clean membranes and the disposal of concentrated brines, which as the strategy states

“can be hard to dispose of”. Council understands that this information will most likely be available in the demonstration plant, however feels this detailed information was needed in the strategy.

Regards,

SUTHERLANDSHIRE



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