

1. Managing water demand must be the main objective of the Western Regional Water Strategy.
2. The NSW Government is saying that the Climate Change predictions for the Western Region are a worst-case scenario, but those predictions are more likely to be what the region will actually experience. Predictions indicate inflows to the Darling/Baaka could reduce by up to 42%. A change in rainfall patterns, increased evaporation, increased average temperatures, higher number of hot days and the length of droughts will increase.
3. The Darling/Baaka is listed as an 'Endangered Ecological Community', meaning dependent fish species are at extremely high risk of extinction in the immediate future. The river must be restored to health through improved water management and protection of flood events.
4. Floodplain harvesting in the Barwon-Darling captures 10 - 15% of the total water taken from the river. The NSW commitment to regulating floodplain harvesting must include a reduction in floodplain harvesting volumes, the removal of harmful floodplain levees and strong rules to protect the environment.
5. I strongly support options that improve outcomes for river health, native fish, waterbirds and wetlands. These include:
 - Commitment 3: implement fish-friendly water extraction – pump screens
 - Commitment 4: modify or remove harmful floodplain structures.
It is critical that this occur before water access licences are granted for Floodplain Harvesting
 - Option 23: remediate fish passage
 - Option 24: restore riparian habitat and re-establish threatened fish species
 - Option 25: remove constraints to enable flows to reach important ecological sites
 - Option 26: protect groundwater dependent ecosystems
 - Option 27: listing Menindee Lakes as Ramsar wetlands
 - Option 28: create fish refuges
 - Option 29: protect Commonwealth owned 'held' environmental water that flows from Queensland
 - Option 44: remove unnecessary weirs
6. I support options that improve First Nations capacity, engagement, and employment in water management, and that recognise the significance of cultural knowledge and improve cultural outcomes. These include:
 - Commitment 1: River Ranger Program
 - Options 16 - 22: Recognition of cultural knowledge, water rights and interests
7. It is particularly important that water consumption in towns and industry is reduced. More efficient use of water is critical to achieve sustainable communities into a future with less water. These include:
 - Option 5: better manage the Great Artesian Basin
 - Option 6: water recycling
 - Option 7: water efficiency in towns and industry.
 - Option 12: covered off-stream storages
 - Option 13: options to secure water for small communities
 - Option 14: improve efficiency of water dependent industries

I do not support increased dependency on groundwater

8. All options to improve water quality have my support
 - Options 30 - 35
9. I support strongly all options to improve water information
 - Options 36 - 43

10. However I do object to the following options that are counter to environmental outcomes:

- Option 11: renew town weirs – should be replaced by covered off-stream storages
- Option 48: regulate Barwon-Darling River
- 'Better Baaka' options aimed at reducing the size of Menindee Lakes

11. Comments on commitments:

- Commitment 2 – Fully implement Floodplain Harvesting reforms
No 500% carryover, no rainfall runoff exemption, no more than 16.5 GL (1 gigalitre = 1 billion litres) should be licenced, as per the plan limit.
- Commitment 5 – North-West flow targets
Must meet the Environmental Watering Requirements under the Murray Darling Basin Plan Long-term Watering Plan
- Commitment 6 – Critical dry targets
Support for larger targets: Menindee Lakes minimum 450 GL, 30 GL flow at Wilcannia for 15 consecutive days.

12. I note that there are some conspicuously missing options: improve Darling/Baaka connectivity

- Better connectivity to Lower Darling and Murray River
- More regular flows to the Darling Anabranch

Yours sincerely

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