

Public information session at Dubbo: Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy

About the information session

A public information session on the Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy was held in Dubbo on 9 November 2022.

The session focused on the key challenges identified in the Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy and actions that have been shortlisted to respond to them.

The session was run by an independent facilitator and provided the department with an opportunity to hear diverse perspectives on the Strategy ahead of its finalisation.

The presentation delivered by the department during the information session is available from www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/water/plans-and-programs/regional-water-strategies/public-exhibition/macquarie-castlereagh-regional-water-strategy

Discussion summary

Comments and concerns raised by attendees are summarised below.

Investigate an additional off-river storage at Nyngan (Action 2.1)

- General support for this option and agreement that additional storage would help with efficiency of deliveries to Nyngan.
- Better planning for any future off-river storages is needed given construction and leakage issues with the existing storage.
- Participants noted that about 50% of water is lost through evaporation and seepage when delivering water through the Albert Priest Channel however there that been no government funding to improve delivery efficiencies in this area.

Create water savings through changed operation of regulated effluent creeks (Action 2.2)

- Strong concerns and opposition to changing the operation of the effluent creeks and the potential loss of the regulated river status.
- Concern that impacts of this option would outweigh the benefits and that water savings would be negligible.
- Concern that the environmental values of the effluent creek system were not sufficiently recognised and suggested investigations and mapping of creek values
- Environmental qualities and benefits of the effluent creek system are integral to the operation of the Macquarie Marshes and, therefore be offered the same protections.

Continue to investigate regional water security solutions for the lower Macquarie (Action 2.3)

Use of some Burrendong Dam flood mitigation storage for regulated water supply

- The majority of participants supported this option, which was viewed as cost effective and easier to implement than other major infrastructure options.
- Some concerns about how additional water from this option would be used and the impacts it could have on the environment.
- Some participants suggested that the option would impact on planned environmental water in the system.

New mid-system 6GL re-regulating weir (existing government commitment)

- Concerns raised about infrastructure maintenance and failure of the weir but support for the upgrade of the proposed fishway.

Pipeline from Dubbo to Nyngan

- There were differing views on where the pipeline could start and finish.
- Clarification sought on whether the Alfred Priest Channel would be filled in with the pipeline option. It was confirmed that this option assumes this would occur.

Other discussion points

- Some participants requested that the drought of record be updated, and the water accounting process be changed from annual accounting to continuous accounting.
- General support for the action to improve connectivity with the Barwon-Darling. It was suggested that the department to look at connectivity to the Barwon-Darling system from Gunningbar Creek through the Bogan River system, in addition to the Macquarie Marshes.
- A raft of timber (e.g., willows) and debris in the Macquarie River near Warren is currently blocking flows/forming weirs along the river system. Despite inspections by government representatives no one has taken responsibility to clear – getting solutions to issues that are cutting across departments can be made difficult due to jurisdictional ambiguity.
- Concerns were raised about approvals relating to floodplain harvesting and achievement of flow targets.
- There should be more monitoring gauges along the Macquarie River and Gunningbar Creek.