

I am making this submission to the second draft of the Macquarie Castlereagh Water Strategy on behalf of the Bathurst Branch of the NSW Farmers Association. I wish to specifically comment on the proposed action 1.3.

Proposed action 1.3

• Operation of Suma Park and Winburndale dams – developing triggers and communication protocols for when environmental water releases may need to be suspended from council-owned dams and infrastructure during extreme droughts. To give certainty to both Council and the environment, there may need to be changes to operating licences and water sharing arrangements.

The Winburndale Rivulet is a reliable and highly valued water source for the many farm businesses that operate on it. Many of these farming families are multi-generational and precede the building of the Winburndale Dam. The management of the dam by Bathurst Regional Council during the last drought was outside their conditions of operation and caused significant hardship and untold damage to the environment of the Winburndale Rivulet and the Winburndale Valley. Council were issued with a breach notice by the NRAR.

Action 1.3 seeks to potentially shut off environmental flows during extreme drought in favour of flows to Bathurst township's urban residents and businesses. It must be recognised that farming businesses also have water requirements and are in most cases impacted earlier and more adversely by drought than their city counterparts. The environment also has basic needs to sustain itself in a drought. This Action 1.3 is a city centric concept and seems unthinkable in a modern age where environmental outcomes are valued along with the growth of vibrant and healthy communities. If the complete disregarding of farmers stock and domestic rights as well as environmental flows is the only way Bathurst will survive in drought in the future then perhaps the city has reached the limits of its potential growth. Many other options would have to precede such a severe action including the highest level of water restrictions in the city as well as complete utilisation of water recycling.

A more equitable option that includes basic environmental flow allocations and the valuing of farm businesses and families is required. The aims of the Water strategy dictate this and the wishes of the broader community demand it.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the second draft of the water strategy.

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