

## Submission of [REDACTED] to the Draft Lachlan Water Strategy – November 2023

The [REDACTED] extend their compliments to DPI Water for the exemplary work undertaken in developing the Draft Lachlan Strategy.

### Background

- The water security development proposal for Burcher is for private sector delivery of new town water and sanitation infrastructure, where private capital, innovation and competition, delivered by means of the NSW Water Industry Competition Act, can facilitate significant new demand, including new development.
- There is currently an insufficient rate base in Burcher, which means that the local water users (LWU) cannot independently fund safe and secure services, as capital and operating costs would exceed revenue from user and service charges. The current system is not fit for purpose, with the village within the Government's assessment of the 59% of LWU systems in the highest categories of risk.

### Submission

- The Submission of the [REDACTED] notes that the DPI Water strategy for the Lachlan Catchment aligns with and compliments strategies from other agencies, including Infrastructure NSW, Infrastructure Australia, NSW Treasury and the expressed priorities and implementation plan of DPI Water's NSW Water Strategy 2021 as set out in this submission, to allow the delivery of genuine town water security in Burcher, and villages like Burcher.

### Alignment with Infrastructure NSW (INSW)

- The submission is that private sector delivery should be clearly addressed in the strategy reflecting INSW recommendation 9.54: "Utilise all viable commercial models and approaches to enable additional opportunities for private sector investment in infrastructure, including" –
  - "Complementary development of assets that deliver additional services and benefit to offset the public infrastructure costs".
  - "Development of infrastructure assets in a manner suitable for PPP procurement".
- Government has previously expressed its support:
  - "NSW Government will explore opportunities for private sector involvement in infrastructure investment, while taking steps to ensure that commercial agreements are directed towards the economic and social benefits of networked infrastructure".

- “To be successful, a private sector delivery strategy will require strong government support, close collaboration with stakeholders and a commitment to sustaining the delivery of solutions over a long time period”. (Ref INSW Chapters 7.4 INSW 2022-2042 Strategy)

## Alignment with Infrastructure Australia (IA)

- Reliable water and wastewater services — a human right: “All Australians have a right to safe, reliable water and wastewater services. This is not only essential to meet basic human needs, but critical for strengthening outcomes for health, wellbeing, economic prosperity and sustainable development” (Reforms to meet Australia's future infrastructure needs: IA August 2021).

## Why Burcher

- Water security of a town water quality, along with the appropriate sanitation infrastructure delivered by means of the NSW Water Industry Competition Act, can transform Burcher from a community at risk, to a unique Showpiece of Water Sustainability.



- Burcher, while small, is surrounded by an extensive farming community and positions itself as an agricultural village. It is attractive, tidy, and with excellent, well-maintained amenity. It is relatively close to existing and potential future mining operations.
- Water security and new sanitation infrastructure at Burcher will enable facilitation of new social and affordable (S&A) housing development proposed as 30 new dwellings on Aboriginal owned village titles shown above.
- Beneficiaries of S&A housing will reap the benefit of “nearness”, which the overall Droughtmaster project’s extensive community consultation has indicated as the principal objective of all community stakeholder groups.
- By virtue of the inclusive nature of the community, loneliness will not be a factor for S&A housing beneficiaries, with loneliness otherwise an increasingly important social and health issue within the demographic.

## Development Alignment with NSW Treasury Closing-the-Gap

- The Wyalong Local Aboriginal Land Council (WLALC), which owns the village allotments, has given in-principal support for the development. This aligns with key objectives NSW Treasury's Outcome Budgeting Landscape Report towards Closing-the-Gap, including: "Strategic evidence-based investment in First Nations communities".

## Development Alignment with INSW Strategy

- "Deliver a housing program that delivers new and diverse social, affordable and market housing supply to meet demand in partnership with the community housing and private sectors".

## Other Development

- While Burcher is relatively distant from other towns, (50km from West Wyalong and 60km from Condobolin), it is only 20km from Evolution Mining's existing Cowal Gold Operation, which is undergoing expansion.
- It is the provision of housing for mine worker families that the [REDACTED] sees as a foundation for new development, where the availability of such housing is very limited and at a significant premium across the region. The housing issues were raised by two of the three local government responses to the recent EIS public consultation process for the extension of the mine.
- New housing development at Burcher, with genuine town water security and reticulated sanitation, can also provide the basis for mine worker families, in circumstances where the new housing being developed by the mining company elsewhere in the region appears to be oriented to drive in/drive out single mine workers.
- Housing for mine worker families so close to the mine may allow the mining company to discharge some of its social license obligations in this regard.
- To develop new housing for mine worker families requires Government to progress Action 1.9 from the Draft Strategy to: "Better integrate strategic and water planning". The [REDACTED] will retain specialist resources to undertake a development concept masterplan for the village and seek to have it incorporated in the LEP.
- Alignment with the INSW Strategy includes 12d: "Ensure strategic land use plans consider social and affordable housing developments in locations well connected to key infrastructure, services and amenities, and promote mixed tenure and diverse community outcomes In relation to services and amenity".

## Rebuilding the School

- To attract mining families, as well as most categories of S&A housing beneficiaries, the Burcher primary school, which was closed down in the mid-2000s, needs to be re-established.
- At the time of the closure of the primary school there were only six pupils, however today there are as many as 30 young pupils in the area who have to travel by bus each day to either West Wyalong at 50kms, Condobolin at 60kms, or Forbes at 70kms.
- School kids get on the bus at 7.45am in the morning and don't arrive home until 4.45pm. It's an unsatisfactory arrangement for young people.
- S&A housing and mine worker family housing would likely see the number of primary school aged children across the district increase to above 50. It's unlikely that Government would need to be involved directly in funding a new school, which could be private, proposed to be rebuilt on four native titles in the village identified for the purpose and with the in principal support of the traditional owners.

## Jobs

- Any plan for S&A housing requires available jobs for housing beneficiaries, who may have mutual obligation requirements. At Burcher this could potentially include micro-irrigation development, incorporating traditional indigenous foods, which the overall project is in a position to establish.
- Employment at the mine will remain an important employment option for Burcher residents suited to work in a mining and related services environment.

## Associated Development

- Adequate sanitation infrastructure is equally important for village development as water security of a town water quality. There does not appear to be any direct mention of sanitation services and other infrastructure in the Draft Lachlan Strategy.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission, and we look forward to an enabling strategy to support Burcher to become a showpiece of water sustainability.

