


Regional Water Strategies,
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
NSW State Government
Locked Bag 5022,
Parramatta NSW 2124



RE: Council neglect towards farmers for water use

To whom this may concern,

I have been made aware of a document from NSW Government entitled "*Draft Regional Water Strategy Macquarie-Castlereagh*" 

This document details NSW Government's intent to conduct a "*feasibility study to identify options to improve water security for towns that rely on water from the Upper Macquarie system*".

I would like to express serious concerns over the viability of several options put forward in this study with huge detriment to the farmers along the Macquarie River. Please refer to a copy of an extract of the feasibility study (Options 4 and 5) attached to my letter.

Two options put forward in this feasibility study which I would like to dispute are:

- **Option 4** "Improving town water security in the Upper Macquarie unregulated river system"
- **Option 5** "Drought protocols for Bathurst and Oberon town water supply"

Option 4

This option discusses investigating the construction of a pipeline from Chiefly Dam to Bathurst Water Treatment Plant. The construction of such a pipeline would completely restrict the flow of water to farms along the Macquarie River. This would impact the viability of 20 plus farms in this vicinity. The river flow from the Chiefly Dam is already highly regulated and controlled by Bathurst Council as it is now, with pumping restrictions in place for farmers.

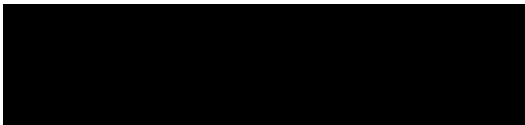
Option 5

In the event of 'extreme drought conditions', it is suggested that water be restricted for all farms and diverted solely for town water purposes. With water an integral part of farming, this option would also completely destroy my business (and other farms along the river).

Your asking farmers to surrender the significant amount of money already invested in the management of live crops, the cost of labour to plant these crops and a huge disruption to the supply chain of vegetables; of which Bathurst remains to be a significant location for the injection of vegetables in the market, in the summer period particularly. How can we as farmers continue in the management of business, if at any given time, council has the option to cut this water supply at any moment.


This feasibility study has been developed without due consent to all stakeholders, namely farmers. The NSW Government options taken to *"improve the security, reliability, quality and resilience of the state's water resources....for a liveable and prosperous regional NSW"* is going to have the exact opposite outcome. The economic prosperity to the 20 plus farms in this region will be completely decimated, farms which employ local workers who will also be impacted. The flow-on effect if Farming businesses are destroyed would have significant consequences to the Bathurst economy. We farmers regularly use local businesses such as mechanics, hydraulics, irrigation and farm supply companies, engineers, machinery supplies, repairmen and seedling nurseries. This water plan has the power to destroy the economic viability of Bathurst and surrounding towns.

Thank you for your time



Option 4: Improving town water security in the upper Macquarie unregulated river system

Source: CENTROC 2009, *WaterNSW, councils in the Macquarie-Castlereagh region*

Description	<p>Conduct a feasibility study to identify options to improve water security for towns that rely on water from the upper Macquarie (unregulated) system, which include Bathurst (Campbells River and Fish River), Orange (Summerhill Creek, unregulated Macquarie River) and Oberon (Fish River), Lithgow (Farmers Creek, Fish River, Clarence Colliery transfer) and Sydney Water between Katoomba and Mt Victoria (Fish River).</p> <p>The study would establish the current and future needs of water users in the system and holistically examine the range of options available to improve water security for these towns. It would build on previous work already completed by Councils, CENTROC and WaterNSW.</p>
Intent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve town water security through various water sources and delivery mechanisms in the upper Macquarie. • Identify water security deficiencies, potential water sources, scheme linkages and preferred options for further development. • Address water quality issues in some parts of the system.
Challenges addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased climate variability poses new risks to towns, communities and industries in the Macquarie-Castlereagh. • Provide regional towns with multiple sources of supply.
Potential combinations	<p>This option could be combined with Option 7 (Reuse, recycling and stormwater projects), Option 3 (Managed aquifer recharge investigations and policy) and Option 6 (Inter-regional connections project investigation).</p>
Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The water needs of communities and industries in the upper Macquarie (unregulated) system are undergoing significant change with the growth of cities like Orange and Bathurst, changed water management from mine operations and the closure of the Wallerawang power station, which is associated with a large water entitlement. • The system is challenged by significant variability in stream flows and supplies water for diverse uses including power generation, town water supply and other customers. • The Fish River system is a key component of the upper Macquarie catchment supplying water for customers in the Greater Sydney Metropolitan area, power generation, minor consumers and the townships of Oberon, Lithgow and surrounding villages. • A number of options have previously been identified including pipe networks, recycled water use, groundwater, treated mine water and temporary purchase of water for these towns in the upper catchment. • Bathurst Council is investigating a pipeline from Chiefly Dam to Bathurst to improve security of supply, a pipeline from the Winburndale Dam to Bathurst water treatment plant to supplement the Chiefly Dam supply and a stormwater harvesting scheme to capture and use urban stormwater run-off. • Orange Council has increased its take from the Macquarie River in times of drought. Orange is also investigating options to improve the water security of its town water supply headworks through increased urban stormwater harvesting and augmentation and upgrade of other local water sources. • Lithgow is looking at the viability of alternative supply options to increase its water security and to provide water to new industry. • Downstream impacts in the Macquarie River from extractions in the upper Macquarie River catchment also need to be understood and quantified. • Impacts on cultural heritage/employment opportunities for Aboriginal people need to be assessed.
Objective	
Further information	<p>www.centroc.com.au/centrocs-advocacy-priorities/water-infrastructure/water-security-study/</p>

Option 5: Drought protocols for Bathurst and Oberon town water supply

Source: NSW Government Temporary water restriction (Macquarie Bogan Unregulated and Alluvial Water Source) Order 2019

Description	<p>Review the water sharing plan for the Macquarie Bogan Unregulated and Alluvial Water Source to identify appropriate drought triggers and responses to protect water supply for critical water needs in extreme drought conditions.</p> <p>Bathurst Council has advised that because of dry conditions, high losses and regular irrigation extractions, council has to release four to five times the water required for Council's needs from Chifley Dam over summer to ensure sufficient volume reaches their offtake.</p> <p>To protect Bathurst's town water supply during the recent drought, temporary pumping restrictions were in place (upto July 2020) to restrict access for unregulated licence holders between Bathurst and major upstream dams.</p> <p>A review of the water sharing plan rules would determine whether permanent changes to these rules, including drought triggers and responses, could be needed in the future.</p>
Intent	<p>Extend the available water supply for Bathurst and Oberon town use and critical needs by reducing the demand on water releases from the Oberon and Chifley Dams in extreme conditions.</p>
Challenges addressed	<p>Increased climate variability poses new risks to towns, communities and industries in the Macquarie-Castlereagh.</p>
Considerations	<p>This option would need to consider whether there are likely to be any impacts on other uses along the river.</p> <p>The new non-urban metering framework announced by the NSW Government as part of its 2017 Water Reform Action Plan will support this option.</p>
Objective	