

From: [REDACTED]
To: [DPIE W Regional Water Strategies Mailbox](#)
Subject: Macquarie-Castlereagh RW Strategy
Date: Friday, 18 November 2022 11:58:02 PM

Hello RWS team,

Thank you for your work considering previous submissions, short-listing and revising options, seeking and considering further comments.

I have been interested in water management across the Macquarie catchment and through the Macquarie River and its effluents since the late 1980s and 1990s when I inspected various locations and attended many meetings discussing management of both water quantity and quality. While I know less about the Castlereagh and Bogan I appreciate their individual characters and importance to both human and ecological communities. While some aspects of river or catchment management have improved, there has been too much emphasis on enabling irrigation-based development and insufficient restriction of practices that have adverse consequences for other people or ecosystems – not just the Marshes but also fish, other ecosystems and the people and ecosystems of the Barwon and Darling/Baaka. The upper Castlereagh was recognised as ‘stressed’ in the 1990s and is still stressed. Recognition of the predicted average and variable effects of climate change is important. A new Strategy is needed so I appreciate the effort that has gone into developing this one.

Top priority should be given to river health in all rivers and creeks, particularly to providing the flow regimes needed by aquatic, wetland and floodplain ecosystems. Unfortunately, the RWS proposals miss some key opportunities to prioritise river health. For example, it could be improved if by proposing

- To assist moves throughout the region towards regenerative land uses/practices that enable better absorption of rainfall, storage in soil and gradual release into streams
- To ensure that capture of harvestable “rights” are not being exceeded
- To substantially reduce floodplain harvesting while-ever there are some downstream water needs that have not been satisfied, (e.g. Long term watering plans for the Barwon-Darling-Baaka and the Lower Darling/Baaka) instead of proposing to implement only the government’s current appallingly poor proposal (4.7)
- To enable more water licences to be sold to environmental water holders
- To regularly review the drought-of-record and apply what is known about likely future drought severity by changing management of dams accordingly, both to be able to provide.

I will refer to the RWS proposed priorities for convenience.

Priority 1: Secure water supplies for growing regional cities and towns

I support the shift proposed in 1.1 to an ‘enduring level of supply’ approach. I trust this means dropping the ‘5:10:10 rule’. This change should be introduced statewide immediately so local water supply authorities apply the new approach in their IWCM planning. Communities should also have to plan to live within the means of the environment to support them along with indigenous species and ecosystems. State funding should only be provided to assist in meeting the ‘enduring level of supply’ – given the expected effects of climate change on future droughts

throughout NSW, it would be unfair and unrealistic to try to stretch limited public funds to meet the wishes of some communities for growth in water use because there will be neither water nor money to meet everyone's wishes for only minor restrictions in drought. 1.1 should apply to smaller regional towns as well as large ones.

I also support actions 1.2 to 1.5. Water conservation though efficiency improvements is fundamental and recycling of water should become the norm. I also support 1.8.

Action 1.6 should be focussed on helping Bathurst and Orange to work out how to live within their environment's means to avoid piping water from more river sources.

Priority 2: Reduce water security risks in the region's west

I support 2.1 if a 3rd storage is needed for an 'enduring level of supply' and only filled in periods of relatively high river flow. Means of reducing evaporation should be tried.

I support 2.2 investigating changes to effluent creek management so they are more naturally varying in flow and efficient.

I object to the proposed Gin Gin re-regulating weir and to use of the flood mitigation component of Burrendong for irrigation supply. Replacing Albert Priest channel with a pipeline is sensible.

I strongly support 2.4 increasing connection with the Barwon – The Macquarie should be a major contributor to meeting the Long term watering plan for the Barwon-Baaka. Don't stop at investigating how to: do it.

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Priority 3: Support industry and community climate adaptation

I support 3.1-3. And 3.9.

I object to the focus of 3.4 on increasing extraction of groundwater – yes learn more about it but apply precaution and avoid risks to groundwater sustainability.

3.5 is a good start but should go beyond investigating to supporting Aboriginal participation in many and various aspects of water management. I also support 3.6 and 3.7.

3.8 There has been too much focus on supporting economic production using water. Some change is needed but this should be focussed on enabling production to be more ecologically sustainable – which might also be economically useful with a longer-term focus on surviving droughts without expecting to irrigate through them. Diversification should not be dependent on high security licences.

Priority 4: Best use of existing water for the environment

I support 4.1-5.

I support assessing gaps in providing the flow regimes needed by the environments in regulated and unregulated streams but I object to the requirement proposed in 4.6 to not significantly impact on extractive water users when trying to meet these.

I strongly object to 4.7 – a major reduction in floodplain harvesting is needed not the current approach of making something close to the current level of harvesting permanent.

I support continued careful management of locally, regionally and nationally significant environmental assets. I thought they would have largely been identified by now so I presume 4.8 is about where to increase rehabilitation effort. This may need more water as well as more well-funded effort guided by ecologists and the EWAG.

Yours faithfully

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