



10 November 2023

SUBMISSION ON THE DRAFT REGIONAL WATER STRATEGY – LACHLAN

The Draft Lachlan Regional Water Strategy, while a step in the right direction, leaves much to be desired, especially concerning the interests of the urban communities along the river. Council would note the submission period is a relatively tight timeframe to provide a considered response involving all of our relevant stakeholders.

The government's recent decision to not proceed with the raising of the Wyangala Dam wall and therefore its exclusion from this strategy is considered a generational mistake, the cost of which will be felt by the communities along the Lachlan for many years to come. Council is of the view that the flood mitigation opportunities and the drought resilience capacity of our towns has been largely either ignored or not misunderstood by this decision and this is reflected throughout the strategy.

We express our dismay at the proposal's failure to pursue investigating a pipeline from Wyangala to Cowra to enable the "dead water" to be accessed in extreme drought and additional connections to other communities in times of critical human need. This oversight once again demonstrates a disregard for the urban communities along the river, which are in dire need of sustainable water management solutions during increasing climate extremes. The absence of a concrete plan to investigate the pipeline demonstrates a concerning pattern of "planning for plans."

It is essential to move beyond the realm of intentions and take concrete steps to address the water challenges faced by these communities. Water security is not a theoretical issue; it is a pressing concern that requires immediate action. While we acknowledge the complexities involved in water management, the persistent postponement of critical infrastructural developments perpetuates the suffering of communities that rely on the river's resources.

While acknowledging the efforts made in the proposed strategy, we stress the necessity of a more proactive and holistic approach. The current strategy, though well-intentioned, appears fragmented and lacks a comprehensive vision that accounts for the interconnectedness of various water-related issues. We call for an integrated approach that considers the diverse needs of the entire region, including both rural and urban communities, agriculture, and ecological conservation. It is imperative that the strategy takes into account the delicate balance between water use for human consumption, agriculture, and environmental sustainability.

Regarding the Governance and Implementation aspect of the strategy, we express gratitude for the acknowledgment of our request for local governments to have a seat at the table.

However, we emphasise the critical need for a governance structure that endures beyond the transient nature of government leadership. The issues faced by the Lachlan region are complex and multifaceted, requiring a long-term approach that transcends changes in political administration. A stable and resilient governance framework is essential for ensuring the sustained implementation of water management initiatives and policies.

While we acknowledge the efforts put forward in the Draft Lachlan Regional Water Strategy, we urge a significant reevaluation of its priorities and approach. The urgent need for tangible action, a more comprehensive strategy, and a resilient governance structure cannot be overstated. The urban communities along the Lachlan river deserve a sustainable water management plan that addresses their immediate needs while also securing their long-term water security

Yours faithfully

