

What We Heard Summary

Border Rivers Draft Regional Water Strategy



December 2021

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment is developing 12 regional water strategies to provide long-term tailored water management solutions for NSW's regional communities.

A comprehensive consultation program accompanied the release of the draft strategy. The **What We Heard** report summarises the key issues we heard during the public exhibition. It highlights how your feedback has informed the next steps in developing the Border Rivers Regional Water Strategy. This consultation summary contains highlights of the [What We Heard](#) report.

We received a range of feedback on the draft strategy, including the individual proposed options. The following themes emerged during this consultation:



Using the new climate data

The new climate modelling generated interest, with discussion focused on its impacts on water users and water resource management in the region. Feedback emphasised the importance of driving demand management and water efficiency options, as well as enabling training and information sharing to assist communities in preparing for future climate change.



Environmental health and connectivity

The need to protect the environment and ecosystems in the region was consistently communicated in the feedback. Consideration of the region as part of the broader Northern Basin was encouraged and indicative of the system-wide view expressed by many stakeholders.



Aboriginal water rights and connection to Country

There was broad support for improving the recognition of First Nations/Aboriginal People's water rights, interests and access. This included the proposed options that encourage local involvement, employment and cultural benefits. Suggestions were made for improvement of future consultation.



Entitlement reliability and risk management

The potential climate change risks for future water availability and the reliability of entitlements in the region, were of major concern. The feedback emphasised the need to better understand these risks and to develop appropriate mitigation strategies.



Strategic land and water planning and other reforms

The interactions between land and water resources and the various risks that different land uses pose, was a consistent topic. The feedback raised the need to more closely align the regional water strategies with regional and economic development strategies.



New and existing water infrastructure

The majority of feedback was on the government commitment for the Mole River Dam business case, and the proposed options to raise Pindari Dam and build an inland diversion from the east. For each of these, comments reflected support and concern. Questions were also asked about the status of government commitments and the options assessment process.



Inter-jurisdictional water management

The NSW-centricity of the draft strategy raised questions about how the options shortlisted are consistent with the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, the NSW Water Management Act 2000 and inter-jurisdictional water management arrangements with Queensland.



Read the full [What We Heard](#) report at:
www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/regional-water-strategies

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Our Response

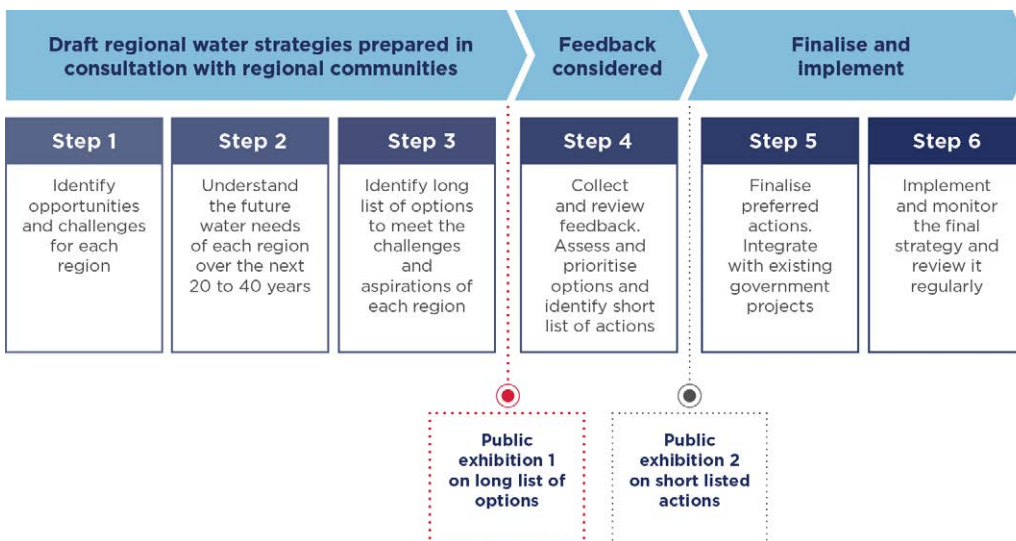
Your feedback has been used to refine and focus the Border Rivers Regional Water Strategy and the options that will be shortlisted for further investigation. The NSW Water Strategy addresses issues raised in the feedback that are consistent across the state.

Our detailed response, set out in the draft Border Rivers Regional Water Strategy **What We Heard** Report, includes the following:

- Opportunities to progress region-specific *Aboriginal community options*, in parallel with state-level actions, will be explored in the final Border Rivers Regional Water Strategy.
- *Environmental health and connectivity* across basins has been included as a priority in the NSW Water Strategy (Action 3.7).
- There is an opportunity to consider *integrating land use and water management* earlier and more strategically through the planning system.
- Links with Queensland and *inter-jurisdictional water management* efforts are ongoing to achieve consistent water management arrangements in border communities.
- *Water reliability and infrastructure* projects will be assessed through the rapid cost-benefit analysis process.

We will be undertaking a second round of public consultation on the short listed actions before the Border Rivers Regional Water Strategy is finalised.

The draft Border Rivers Regional Water Strategy was on public exhibition from 20 October - 13 December 2020. The development process for these regional water strategies is illustrated in the diagram below.



Engagement at a glance



1

phone consultation



716

unique website page visits



42

formal submissions



2

public information sessions

26 attendees



6*

Aboriginal community sessions

36 attendees



1

live webinar

97 attendees

*The two sessions held in Mungindi were outside of this public exhibition period.