

What We Heard Summary

Far North Coast Region 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 Far North Coast 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:



Aboriginal knowledge and connection to country

There was broad support for improving the recognition of First Nations/Aboriginal People's water rights, interests and access to water. There was recognition that inclusion of Aboriginal knowledge of land and water management could enhance the outcomes of many of the proposed options.



Water infrastructure

The feedback received throughout this consultation period, particularly in the formal submissions, was predominantly in opposition to the proposed Dunoon Dam at Rocky Creek (Option 14). There was support for proposed desalination infrastructure that is fuelled by green energy options.



Water Security

Water security was raised in the context of the population and economic growth that the region is experiencing. Stakeholders called for the adoption of water efficiency projects to increase supply through reduced wastage and for population management.



Flooding and flood mitigation

This was raised as an issue in the region, particularly in the Richmond River valley. Feedback encouraged the development of climate modelling for extreme rainfall and rising sea levels, with appropriate options developed for mitigating their impacts.



Groundwater

Stakeholders expressed that better groundwater knowledge was an imperative and that more work is needed to better understand the relationship between surface water and groundwater resources. There was concern that groundwater sources were being exploited through commercial harvesting for water bottling.



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

PUB21/826

Our Response

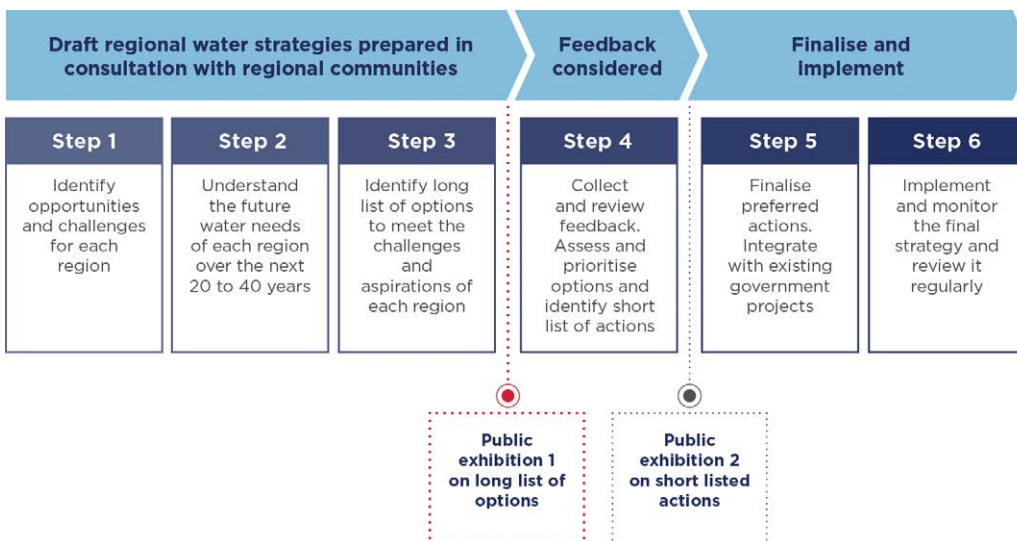
Your feedback has been used to refine the key challenges that we need to focus on in the final Far North Coast Regional Water Strategy, and the options that will be shortlisted for further investigation. The NSW Water Strategy addresses issues raised in the feedback that are consistent across the state.

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

- The climate and data modelling will be used to review water allocation frameworks and water sharing plan provisions in response to extremes in water availability, and in assessing the long-term water security of individual towns.
- Opportunities to progress region-specific Aboriginal community options will be identified in parallel with state-level actions.
- Climate modelling will be used to assess impacts and associated risks to groundwater, along with state-wide actions for sustainable groundwater management, via the NSW Groundwater Strategy.
- Opportunities will be considered to integrate land use and water management earlier and more strategically through the planning system.
- Adopting a more intense, state-wide focus on improving water quality through the definition of clear roles, accountabilities and frameworks for monitoring, assessing and addressing water quality risks across the state (NSW Water Strategy Action 3.5).
- Water infrastructure projects have been assessed for the short list of actions via a tailored cost-benefit analysis.

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

The draft Far North Coast Regional Water Strategy was on public exhibition from 30 October - 13 December 2020. The development process for these regional water strategies is illustrated in the diagram below.



Engagement at a glance



3

phone consultation



2,702

unique website page visits



245

formal submissions



2

public information sessions

31 attendees



1

Aboriginal community sessions

13 attendees



1

live webinar

27 attendees



Find more information about the Far North Coast Regional Water Strategy

www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/regional-water-strategies