

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Broadway
NSW 2007
[REDACTED]

Water New South Wales
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
regionalwater.strategies@dpie.nsw.gov.au

SUBMISSION: Draft BORDER RIVERS REGIONAL WATER STRATEGY

I welcome the opportunity to comment on this strategy, while noting that it is perforce hampered by the ability to address only the southern, NSW section of the Border Rivers catchment, one of the several major river catchments feeding into the Barwon Darling River.

The Northern Basin catchments -of which the Border Rivers is one - joining into the Southern Basin of Murray Darling system have evolved as a complex connected element of the eastern Australian continent, long known as subject to extremes of drought and plenty. Articulating a regional water strategy for just one catchment is challenging in the absence of an overarching framework for the whole.

Acknowledging this constraint, I maintain that water management should provide for a regime that sustains the ecological health of the watercourses, wetland, floodplain and groundwaters.

The following points are made from the above perspective

It is essential to recognise that open ended increase in water extraction is unachievable, and that there is need to wind down expectations of growth dependent on water take, while boosting water saving and demand management options together with measures that sustain and enhance environmental health.

In seeking to deliver security of supply, it is important to realise that dams and weirs do NOT increase the volume of water available but rather change its accessibility, as well as having

disadvantages including cost (for both construction and management) loss of biological connectivity, reduction in downstream flow, upstream flooding and evaporation.

The NSW side of the Border Rivers catchment includes some wetlands of outstanding cultural significance most notably Boobera Lagoon, Pungbougai Lagoon and the Morella watercourse. The water extraction regime must be such as to ensure the values of these areas is sustained.

Safeguarding groundwater sources and groundwater recharge is important: over-extraction with excessive draw-down risks collapse, while extraction from the hyporheic zone affects surface water flows.

Options put forward in the draft Strategy that enhance and reinforce the environmental health are supported, including the dismantling of all instream infrastructure that is no longer needed.

New barriers and enhancement of existing barriers, notably Mole Dam and upgrading of Pindari Dam, are opposed.

Delivering water security to the environment and to people are key objectives of the NSW Water Act. While this catchment is a component of a system that is greater than the sum of its parts: in other words a water strategy for the Border Rivers should be compatible with and complement the strategies for all the other catchments of the Murray Darling Basin.