

To: Raj Autar, Director Infrastructure and Environment
From: Maruf Hossain, Coordinator Floodplain and Water Management
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Subject: Greater Sydney Water Management Strategy
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Reference is made to the Greater Sydney Water Management Strategy - Water for a Resilient Sydney, September 2021. The recent drought from 2017 to February 2020 brought water security in Greater Sydney into sharp focus. Storage levels in Warragamba Dam dropped by 50% of full dam capacity in two and a half years, which was a much faster rate of depletion than in previous droughts.

To ensure a sustainable water supply in the Greater Sydney region for now and future generations, the NSW Government has developed the Greater Sydney Water Management Strategy. The strategy outlines a direction for delivering sustainable and integrated water services to Greater Sydney for the next 20 to 40 years, servicing a growing Greater Sydney. The water services covered in the strategy include the delivery of drinking water, wastewater, recycled water and stormwater services in land use planning.

The strategy seeks to address five significant and inter-related issues as outlined below:

1. Service a growing population - not relying solely on these dams and the Sydney Desalination Plant to meet all future water needs.
2. Build resilience to drought and a changing climate - future climate risks and extreme events cannot meet water needs by only using traditional water supply approaches.
3. Support the economy and jobs - to use water more productively and efficiently and meet water needs at a reasonable cost.
4. Put water at the heart of our city and communities - the need to make the city cooler and greener and maintain healthy waterways and ecosystems.
5. Improve water management outcomes for Aboriginal people - the need to plan for and manage water to support Aboriginal rights, interests and access.

The strategy also considers the potential impact of Government decisions about reducing flood risks in Western Sydney – the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE – OPTIONS

Responding to the challenges, the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, Sydney Water and WaterNSW have worked together to develop strategies and options to ensure Sydney's water systems can respond to growth, while also being resilient to drought conditions that could be more frequent and severe in the future than those have seen in recent history. The following options are being considered:

- Increasing focus on water conservation and efficiency as an immediate and cost-effective response.
- Planning for new rainfall-independent supply - sources to support growth and amenity and to slow storage depletion rates and reduce the risk of reaching extremely low dam levels during drought.
- Investing in transfers, connections and upgrades - to address the risks posed by a lack of system connectivity and ageing assets.
- New dams and dam augmentations.

The draft strategy also outlines pathways towards meeting the NSW Government's priorities for greening and cooling our city by prioritising use of recycled water and stormwater to meet these objectives, integrating water more effectively in our urban environment, and improving our policies and programs for protecting waterways and the natural environment.

All of this will be underpinned by understanding and responding to community preferences. The draft Strategy is currently on public exhibition until 8 November 2021 and the Department is seeking comments and feedback from the community about a range of options as outlined above.

Council expects that the proposed water management strategy for the greater Sydney will be incorporated in the Aerotropolis Water Cycle Management Strategy.



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