

Submission - Draft Greater Sydney Water Strategy

Penrith City Council (Council) thanks the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) for the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Greater Sydney Water Strategy: *Water for a resilient Sydney*, September 2021. Council offers the following response to the draft strategy.

GREATER SYDNEY WATER STRATEGY (DRAFT)

Penrith City Council supports the draft Greater Sydney Water Strategy in so far as it identifies actions to enhance Greater Sydney's resilience to future droughts as our population grows and the climate continues to change. As a higher-level document, it aligns with Council objectives and actions towards a liveable and sustainable city.

The scope of challenges, priorities, principles and potential solutions identified in the strategy are aligned with key priorities and actions in Council's Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) and other strategic planning work, most notably Council's Green Grid Strategy. Council's plans and strategies recognise, at the local level, the key role of water and good water management in making our city cooler and more resilient to changing conditions and supporting liveable sustainable communities.

Whilst Council supports the strategy, further information is requested on expected roles, responsibilities, governance and implementation funding.

FIVE KEY PRIORITIES

Council acknowledges the five challenges, five key principles and five key priorities outlined in the strategy and provides the following responses to each of the five priorities.

Priority 1: We understand how much water we need and when.

Council will continue to collaborate with State Government in developing the detailed servicing plans for growth precincts within the Penrith Local Government Area (LGA), to determine preferred options for provision of water, wastewater and stormwater management, including continued dialogue regarding planned development densities and timing of release/development.

It is recommended that the strategy not only determine how much water we need and when but to also develop a greater evidence base of where we use water to target actions for reducing demand and improving reuse. Greater efficiency and effectiveness of investment will be made with evidence based targeted actions that reduce water demand and improve capture and reuse.

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Recommendations:

- The strategy needs to ensure capacity in the system to service planned residential and employment precincts, in a timely and well-coordinated manner.
- Demonstrated consideration and action is needed to ensure appropriate supply for recreation and rural activities, including emerging agribusiness uses.
- Evidence based understanding and targeted actions for improved efficiency and effectiveness of investment.
- The need to develop a greater understanding on the planning approach and timing of actions with consideration to delivery of road infrastructure and precinct development

Priority 2: Our water systems are sustainable for the long-term and resilient to extreme events

Flooding in the Hawkesbury Nepean catchment continues to be one of the biggest challenges for Penrith in planning and delivering growth in the City. We also need to build resilience to sustain long periods of both drought. There is a need for greater investment in new technologies and innovation in design to maximise the use of every drop.

Increasing a focus on water conservation and efficiency as an immediate and cost-effective response should not only consider conservation and efficiencies in the existing network and in buildings and homes but also in improved landscape design and urban design.

To maximise greenfield and brownfield development opportunities for the installation of new systems, the planning for new infrastructure needs to align with precinct development and delivery of new roads and road upgrades.

Recommendations:

- Seek investment opportunities for new technologies and innovation in design.
- Consider a new approach to urban design and landscape design to reduce water demand, whilst maintaining a cool, green city.
- Align the delivery of new systems with precinct development and delivery of new road infrastructure.

Priority 3: Our city is green and liveable

The strategy aligns well with Council's LSPS which prioritises connecting our blue and green grids and cooling the city, and our Green Grid Strategy which seeks to make much greater use of stormwater and recycled water to cool and green the city and support recreational activities.

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It is worth noting that Penrith City Council already use recycled water for some playing fields and may be interested in exploring this further. Council is looking at ways to make greater use of stormwater and recycled water and integrating water and land use planning more effectively to incorporate sustainable water use into building and landscaping design. Council continues to explore options to better provide water for parks and gardens, irrigating sporting fields and golf courses, and flushing public toilets by way of stormwater harvesting.

In addition to actions to capture and reuse recycled water and stormwater, consideration should equally be given to improved landscape and urban design to reduce water demand whilst still being able to create shade, natural cooling and healthy green and blue open spaces.

Recommendations:

- Consider a new approach to urban design and landscape design to reduce water demand, whilst maintaining a cool, green city.
- Emphasise the importance of blue and green grids and how this may be considered in local planning.

Priority 4: Our waterways and landscapes are healthy

The strategy focuses on resilience, but should equally address sustainability and delivering environmental outcomes, especially for Western Sydney where new growth and development presents opportunities to innovate and improve on the Business-As-Usual approach.

The strategy needs to protect and restore key blue/green assets in recognition of the community benefits and values they provide and support the rehabilitation and naturalisation of all waterways generally.

There should be greater support given to new and emerging technologies in infrastructure planning that prioritises reducing the volume of stormwater that enters our waterways.

There is a great need and benefit to be taken in a change in approach to Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD). WSUD should not be limited to the installation of traditional WSUD infrastructure but would benefit from greater consideration in terms of urban, landscape and building design that is water sensitive. Basic installation of WSUD infrastructure is neither water sensitive *urban design* or *landscape design*. Greater innovation and design creativity in this space is an untapped resource.

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Recommendations:

- For the strategy to equally consider sustainability and environmental outcomes in addition to resilience.
- Provide actions to protect and restore key blue/green assets and the rehabilitation and naturalisation of waterways.
- Provide support to new and emerging technologies that reduce the volume of stormwater that enters our waterways.
- Consider a shift in approach to Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) to be more than the installation of traditional WSUD assets.

Priority 5: Water management and services meet community needs

Council will continue to collaborate with major landholders, Transport for NSW, the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and other stakeholders to improve how we integrate land use and development planning with water management in the landscape to improve liveability and amenity.

Council generally supports water related infrastructure that prioritises reducing the volume of stormwater that enters our waterways and maximising rainwater and stormwater collection and reuse.

There needs to be thorough consideration to the timing and delivery of new development precincts and roads infrastructure to maximise opportunities to implement water actions for improved efficiencies and reduced demand. Implementing actions at the time of delivery of urban development and infrastructure increases opportunities and reduces costs that inevitably would be passed on to the consumer through levies, usage rates and government taxes.

Recommendations:

- Align implementation with precinct development and delivery of new infrastructure.

IMPLEMENTATION

Council supports an integrated framework for monitoring, reviewing and reporting against the strategy.

Informed by the feedback on the draft strategy, the final strategy will include an implementation plan outlining delivery of actions and the roles, responsibilities and timeframes for delivery. Greater clarity and understanding is required on the roles and responsibilities for delivery of actions yet to be identified and what the expectations are, if any, of Local Government in the implementation. The capacity of Local Government to deliver a State Government strategy is constrained.

The implementation plan will need to identify a governance structure and mechanisms for delivery, including funding.

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Recommendations:

- Local Government have the opportunity to review and comment on the implementation plan before the strategy is finalised.
- The strategy and implementation plan need to identify a governance structure and mechanisms for delivery, including funding.

Council poses the following further questions in response to the package:

Further questions

- Will the strategy be used by all levels of government in making strategic planning decisions in NSW?
- What is the next step for implementation of the strategy? How will it be embedded/integrated into planning instruments at all levels and how will it be enforced?
- When will the final adopted strategy come into effect?
- What is the proposed governance structure for implementation of the strategy?
- The next revision of the strategy will include an implementation plan. Will Local Government and relevant stakeholders have the opportunity to review the implementation plan and provide comment prior to the strategy being finalised?
- The strategy needs to identify the long-term funding arrangements for implementation of the strategy and identified actions in the implementation plan. How is implementation plan to be funded?
- Detailed clarity is required on the governance, roles, responsibilities and obligations expected from the strategy for State Government, Government Authorities, Local Government, developers and the community.
- Is amendment to Local Strategic Planning Statements, Local Environmental Plans, Development Control Plans or Contribution Plans expected?