

What We Heard Summary

Gwydir 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 the regional communities of NSW.

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 Gwydir 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:



Climate and modelling

The new climate modelling generated interest, with discussion focused on its use in future decision-making for water management in the region. Stakeholders identified opportunities for the modelling to support collaboration and integration of water planning throughout all levels of government.



Environmental health and connectivity

The need to protect the environment and ecosystems in the region was consistently communicated in the feedback. Stakeholders were supportive of water efficiency and water saving options, demand management measures, land management, water quality improvement and groundwater options. There was a focus on the need for consideration of downstream connectivity and end-of-system flows.



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 to water, as well as for the proposed options that integrate Aboriginal water management knowledge, protection of cultural heritage and creation of employment. There was recognition that inclusion of Aboriginal knowledge of land and water management could enhance the outcomes of many of the proposed options.



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. Stakeholders emphasised the need to better understand the risks to develop appropriate mitigation strategies and to be better prepared for a possible future with less water.



New and existing water infrastructure

The majority of feedback was related to the proposed Tareelaro Weir and Lower Gravesend Dam. Stakeholders preferred options that reduce demand for water and minimise environmental impacts, over large infrastructure projects.



Groundwater

Improving our knowledge of groundwater was indicated as an imperative. More work to better understand the relationship between surface water and groundwater resources was encouraged. There was concern that groundwater sources could be over-allocated and under stress in future extreme weather events.



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

PUB21/825

Our Response

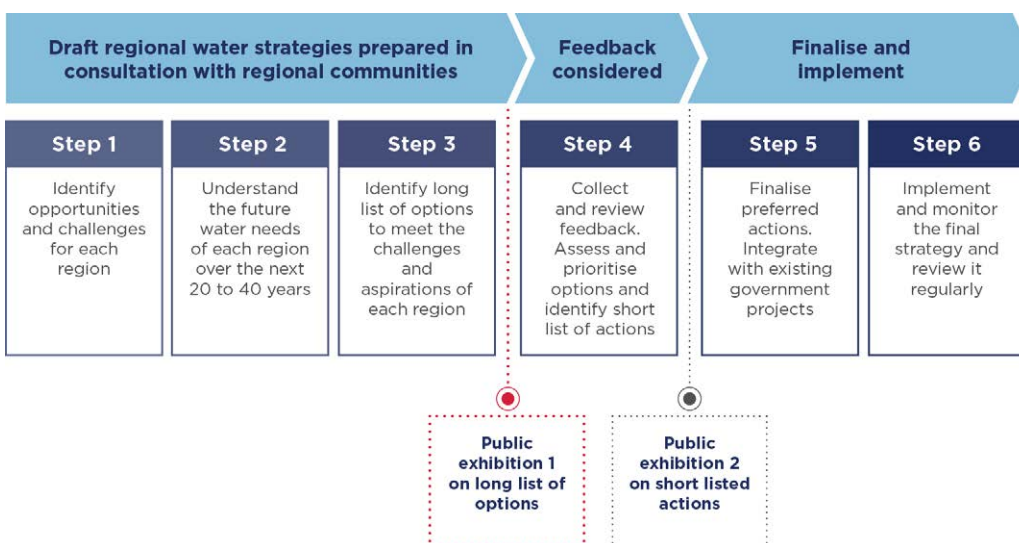
Your feedback has been used to refine and focus the Gwydir Regional Water Strategy and the options that will be shortlisted for further investigation. The NSW Water Strategy addresses issues raised in the feedback that are consistent across the state.

Our detailed response, set out in the draft Gwydir Regional Water Strategy **What We Heard** report, includes the following:

- Opportunities to progress *Aboriginal water rights* will be explored in the final regional water strategy as well as through priority 2 in the NSW Water Strategy.
- *Environmental and ecosystem health and connectivity* throughout the Gwydir catchment will be supplemented with additional options.
- There is an opportunity to consider *integrating land use and water management* earlier and more strategically through the planning system.
- Sustainable *groundwater* management will be enhanced with a state-wide focus through the NSW Groundwater Strategy.
- *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 Gwydir Regional Water Strategy is finalised.

The draft Gwydir Regional Water Strategy was on public exhibition from 25 September - 13 December 2020. The development process for the regional water strategies is illustrated in the diagram below.



Engagement at a glance



32

formal submissions



2

live webinars

25

attendees



1

public information session

15

attendees



1,008

unique website page visits



1

Aboriginal community session

6

attendees



1

phone consultation

4

attendees