



NSW WATER STRATEGY SUBMISSION

Personal Background - Credentials:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this important issue. My background includes having been [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], and a non-executive director on the boards of seventeen organisations in both private and public sectors. I have been recognised as [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. I mention these only for credibility since I am not an expert in water supply matters, nor an engineer. More recently, since 2015, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. This is a role that provides direct insights concerning regional sustainability and experience in community behaviour, which are specifically relevant to regional water strategy.

Reasons for Submission:

I write in support of Water Northern Rivers and the comment that they have already made to your consultation process.

I congratulate the Department on the Draft Water Strategy, its far-reaching vision and clear planning. I would however like to request more emphasis on some specific areas in the final plan, and to advocate in particular further development of a highly necessary educational component if we are to ensure community readiness for necessary behavioural adaptation in the face of rapidly approaching climate changes.

Water Efficiency:

Speaking from the experience of the energy industry, we know that in terms of meeting household energy needs and reducing carbon emissions, energy efficiency has a major role to play, and demand management should, and hopefully will be, a key element in meeting future energy needs. Expensive new infrastructure should support rather than precede what can be achieved at the household, town and city level. Education has a huge role to play in this. The same can clearly be said in relation to water. As you outline both in 6.10 (Fostering a circular water economy), and in 7.1 (piloting new technologies): *"The role of water efficiency should have equal standing with additional supply side options when balancing*



supply and demand to ensure water is being used efficiently before imposing costs on the community for additional water infrastructure.” (p.118) Investment in advanced water efficiency is a cost-effective method of effectively increasing supply which can be implemented at both the supply authority and end-user level.

Diversification of supply including re-use:

At 6.6 you have outlined the need to proactively support diverse water sources, and this might include working with the regional water supply authority to ensure their plans include the areas you outline, such as expanding rainfall independent water sources and adopting recycling for supply augmentation. The Orange treated stormwater program (6.5) is an excellent example of what needs to be developed. Rous Water could be doing far more in this area at present to manage and treat stormwater run-off currently polluting our rivers and going to waste.

It is quite clear that rainfall dependent solutions such as dams are increasingly unreliable as climate change accelerates, and for that reason are a poor pathway for consideration in regional plans.

Need for Education Campaign:

The approaches outlined in sections 6 and 7 regarding priorities, strategies and actions are highly commendable. In my view these could be strengthened to provide a greater sense of urgency regarding the need to provide clear pathways and support for local utilities and the general public to shift their thinking towards the need for water capture and re-use.

Since this is not something to which Australians are accustomed, and on the coast most people have long had a mindset of limitless water supplies, this is a conversation that needs to be undertaken with urgency. We know that bringing the public along to accept water re-cycling, rather than the technology itself, is the difficult part, so emphasis needs to be given to a major campaign, starting now and progressing for the next 10 years at least.

Therefore, while strongly supporting your outlined strategies providing for:

- System change, through support for local authorities to change practices and through removal of regulatory barriers to cost effective water reuse,
- Water security, through research and development for and of diversified sources
- New technology, both for non-rainfall sources such as desalination and PRW, and for water efficiency;

I would also like to see a set of strategies that focus on **programs for water literacy**.

As a resident of the Northern Rivers region, I support the call from the Water Northern Rivers (WaterNR) group for a full-scale educational program and resources to be provided for it.

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