



NSW Water Strategy
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment

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Submission

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the Draft NSW Water Strategy.

Consulting Surveyors NSW is the association representing the private industry of more than 200 surveying firms around the state. These firms employ registered surveyors, technical surveyors, town planners, civil engineers, environmental scientists, landscape architects and other key professionals involved in the land development process. There is a registered surveyor in every major centre and town across the state and most have been operating for many years, helping develop the cadastre for land management that is so critical to the state's success. In fact, no building project can start until the land has been surveyed.

Registered Surveyors are involved in a large range of projects from housing subdivisions to major infrastructure projects and the collection of spatial information and mapping used to improve agricultural activities.

In the process of the fieldwork required to collect data, our surveyors are regularly required to dig into the ground. This poses the risk of disturbing underground infrastructure, so the surveyor applies for a Dial Before You Dig (DBYD) plan in anticipation of this work commencing.

DBYD have all gas and electricity services in NSW applied to their system, as a requirement of the *Energy Legislation Amendment (Infrastructure Protection) Act 2009*. There is no such requirement for water utilities, apart from Sydney Water and Hunter Water, as part of their obligations as statutory authorities. The remaining regional and rural Local Water Utilities (LWUs), operated by the various local councils, are not required to give their information to DBYD. Consulting Surveyors NSW understands that around 12 regional councils voluntarily submit their water and sewerage plans to DBYD. The NSW/ACT branch of DBYD indicated it costs each council in the order of \$1000 a year to maintain their data with DBYD.

When a Registered Surveyor, or indeed **anyone** who applies for a DBYD plan, proceeds to damage water or sewerage utilities that are otherwise not visually indicated (such as a fire hydrant nearby) and that infrastructure is **not** listed on the DBYD plan, the liability for the damage does not lie with that individual. It lies with the LWU and therefore the ratepayers.

As part of the Draft NSW Water Strategy's *Collaboration and Integration* high level objective, Consulting Surveyors proposes that all LWUs register their water and sewerage plans with DBYD. This would embrace the principle of risk reduction in regional NSW in a meaningful and simple way.

When a DBYD plan includes water and sewerage locations, *Objective 5: Affordability*, is addressed by the cost savings of not having to repair the infrastructure and in the water not being wasted by the damage to that asset. The Draft Strategy's high-level approach of *doing more with less* would certainly include the relatively small investment of around \$1000 per annum, per council, as a cost-effective investment.

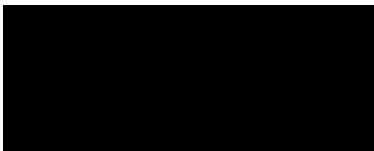
The mandatory inclusion of regional LWU information to the DBYD dataset addresses *Action 1.1*, by increasing the amount and quality of publicly available information about water in NSW. Currently, they only mechanism for getting information about the location of water and sewerage infrastructure from an LWU is to apply to the relevant council and wait up to two weeks for the information. Inclusion in the DBYD scheme would similarly address *Action 6.2*, by working collaboratively with local water utilities to reduce risks to town water supplies, particularly when there is a skills shortage of specialists in maintaining town water infrastructure.

As the primary regulator of LWUs across NSW, the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment has an obligation to see that those LWUs are performing under the Best-Practice Management of Water Supply and Sewerage Framework. We welcome *Action 6.3*, which involves the Office of Local Government in working with the Department, councils and LWUs to implement town water risk reduction programs.

Consulting Surveyors would be pleased to provide further information as the Department requires.

I can be contacted directly on 0425 244 055.

Yours sincerely



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