

Draft NSW Water Strategy submission form

The NSW Water Strategy will be the first 20-year water strategy for all of NSW. It will provide a blueprint to help us tackle the key challenges and opportunities for water management across the state.

For more information about the strategy or to download a copy of the strategy, please visit dpie.nsw.gov.au/nswwaterstrategy.

Your voice is important

We would like to hear your views on the draft strategy, including whether you think it identifies the right priorities, challenges, opportunities and actions.

Please provide your feedback in the submission form below and email your completed submission to nsw.waterstrategy@dpie.nsw.gov.au or post to NSW Water Strategy, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124 **by 28 March, 2021**.

The form will take approximately 15 minutes to complete and your response can remain anonymous if you wish (see question 1).

Questions marked with an asterisk (*) require an answer.

If you have any questions about making a submission, please email:

nsw.waterstrategy@dpie.nsw.gov.au

Making your submission public

We collect information about you, which may include personal information, to assess submissions in response to the department's dealings and activities, and to perform other functions required to complete the project. This information must be supplied. If you choose not to provide the requested information we may not be able to assess your submission.

To promote transparency and open government, we intend to make all submissions publicly available on our website, or in reports. Your name or your organisation's name may appear in these reports with your feedback attributed, unless you have chosen to remain anonymous.

If you would like your submission and/or feedback to be kept confidential, please let us know when making your submission. You will be asked for your confidentiality preference at question 1.

If you request that your submission be kept confidential, it will not be published on our website or included in any relevant reports. However, it will still be subject to the *Government Information Public Access Act 2009*.

Your submission will be stored securely consistent with the department's Records Management Policy and you have the right to request access to, and correction of, your personal information held by the department.

Further details can be found in our privacy statement available on our website.

industry.nsw.gov.au/privacy

1. Information on confidentiality and privacy*

I give permission for my submission to be made publicly available on the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment website.

- Yes
 No

I would like my personal details to be kept confidential.

- Yes
 No

2. Your details

Name*

Contact phone number*

Postcode*

Email address*

Do you identify as an Aboriginal person?

- Yes
 No

Are you an individual or representing an organisation?*

- Individual
 Organisation

3. Organisation or business details

Who do you represent?

- Government New South Wales
- Peak representative organisation Please specify
- Local Water Utility
- Other (please specify) Hunter Water Corporation

4. Draft vision

The NSW Government has developed the draft NSW Water Strategy as part of a suite of long-term strategies to maintain the resilience of the state's water services and resources over the coming decades.

The proposed vision for the draft NSW Water Strategy is sustainable water resources for thriving people, places and ecosystems, both now and for future generations.

Which aspects of water management are most important to you and your local community?

Hunter Water are facing many of the challenges outlined in the Draft NSW Water Strategy, particularly a more variable and changing climate, population growth and ever increasing community expectations. The recent experience of the 2018 to 2020 drought reinforced the need to provide additional resilience to our water supply system so that we can realize our vision to be a valued partner in delivering the aspirations of our region.

Our strategic focus areas include maintaining the safety of our drinking water, improving community liveability, reducing the impact of our operations on waterways, reducing potable water consumption, improving the circular economy, increasing our use of smart technologies and to develop our capability to be future thinking and adaptive to enable us to respond quickly to emerging threats and opportunities.

Central to our approach to water management is increasing community trust through the decisions we make. We are striving for a deeper understanding of our customer and community expectations to deliver the outcomes they desire. Additionally we are implementing a Reconciliation Action Plan which is a reflection of our commitment to create improved economic, health and social outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Do you support the proposed vision for the draft NSW Water Strategy?

- Yes
 No

Please tell us more about your response:

5. Draft objectives

The draft NSW Water Strategy sets high level objectives and principles to guide water service delivery and resource management across NSW. We have identified six core objectives which underpin the draft strategy. These are based on the *Water Management Act 2000*. They are:

- protecting public health and safety
- liveable and vibrant towns and cities
- water sources, floodplains and ecosystems protected
- cultural values respected and protected
- orderly, fair and equitable sharing of water
- contribute to a strong economy.

Which objectives are most important to you?

Please rank the objectives from most important to least important (where 1 is most important and 6 is least important).

- 1 Protecting public health and safety
- 5 Liveable and vibrant towns and cities
- 2 Water sources, floodplains and ecosystems protected
- 6 Cultural values respected and protected
- 4 Orderly, fair and equitable sharing of water
- 3 Contribute to a strong economy

Do you have any comments on any of the proposed objectives?

The proposed objectives are appropriate and consistent with Hunter Water's approach to water management.

6. Draft guiding principles

The draft strategy also proposes seven principles to guide the long-term strategic planning for water resource management in NSW. These principles work in tandem with the draft objectives to guide development and implementation of actions.

The guiding principles are:

- healthy environments sustain social and economic outcomes
- water is a limited (although recyclable) resource
- systems thinking to optimise outcomes
- data-enabled planning and decision-making
- transparency and accountability to engender community trust
- forward thinking to build preparedness and resilience
- giving effect to Aboriginal rights and access to water.

Which principles are most important to you?

Please rank the objectives from most important to least important (where 1 is most important and 7 is least important).

- 3 Healthy environments sustain social and economic outcomes
- 4 Water is a limited (although recyclable) resource
- 7 Systems thinking to optimise outcomes
- 6 Data-enabled planning and decision-making
- 2 Transparency and accountability to engender community trust
- 1 Forward thinking to build preparedness and resilience
- 5 Giving effect to Aboriginal rights and access to water

Do you have any comments on any of the guiding principles?

The guiding principles are appropriate and consistent with Hunter Water's approach to water management. It was difficult to rank these principles as they are all important to water management.

7. Opportunities, challenges and actions for improved state-wide water management

The draft NSW Water Strategy outlines seven strategic priorities for action, focused on meeting the core objectives based on the *NSW Water Management Act 2000*. These strategic priorities are:

1. Build community confidence and capacity through engagement, transparency and accountability
2. Recognise Aboriginal rights and values, and increase access to and ownership of water for cultural and economic purposes
3. Improve river, floodplain and aquifer ecosystem health, and system connectivity
4. Increase resilience to changes in water availability (variability and climate change)
5. Support economic growth and resilient industries within a capped system
6. Support resilient, prosperous and liveable cities and towns
7. Enable a future focused, capable and innovative water sector.

Under each priority the draft strategy identifies several opportunities and challenges, and a total of 41 proposed actions to improve water management across the state.

Do you have any comments on the seven strategic priorities identified?

The strategic priority areas are appropriate and are consistent with the priorities Hunter Water have identified for water management.

Do you have any comments on any of the proposed actions identified?

Hunter Water offers the following commentary in relation to actions under Priority Areas 3, 4 and 6.
Action 3.1: This action acknowledges the lack of long term water plans for coastal catchments. The Williams River currently has no agreed water quality objectives within relevant strategic plans (e.g. the LLS Hunter Local Strategic Plan, The Greater Hunter Regional Water Strategy). The Lower Hunter Water Security Plan will identify projects that will ensure the ongoing provision of safe drinking water however it is working in the absence of NSW State Level water quality objectives.
Action 3.2: Hunter Water supports landscape scale action to improve river and catchment health. It is noted that the suggested actions involve partnerships and continuation of existing programs. Hunter Water is of the view that policy and regulatory responses could also form a part of the solution set e.g. increasing consent conditions for development in the drinking water catchment. Further Hunter Water strongly supports calling out the identification of drinking water catchments within the Draft Strategy. Hunter Water also supports the AWA Source Water Protection Statement on Water Quality https://www.awa.asn.au/AWA_MBRR/Communities/_Specialist_Networks/_Catchment_Management/CM_News.aspx
Action 3.5: Refer to comments for Action 3.1
Action 4.4: Hunter Water supports the delivery of liveability outcomes through an integrated water management approach. The recommendations of the 2020 Federal Government Productivity Commission Research Paper and draft recommendation 5.3 of the NSW Productivity Commission's Green Paper should be incorporated to remove impediments in the policy environment. <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/completed/water-cycle/integrated-urban-water.pdf>
Action 6.8: In addition to the comments provided against Action 4.4, Hunter Water notes that governance options for enhancing the delivery of whole of water cycle solutions are missing from the Draft Strategy. Many IWCM projects are at the boundaries of water utility or local government roles and it is not always clear which entity should lead. Institutional responsibility options should be considered for delivery against Action 6.8.

Are there any additional opportunities, risks and challenges that should be considered in the draft strategy?

Action 6.8. In addition to the comments provided against Action 4.4, Hunter Water notes that improving governance and institutional arrangements to facilitate the delivery of whole of water cycle solutions are missing from the Draft Strategy. The multiple parties involved in the governance and delivery of IWM projects make these processes challenging and often mean that positive outcomes for customers and the environment are not realised. Institutional responsibility options should be considered for delivery against Action 6.8.

What actions should be prioritised for immediate implementation and how should they be implemented?

8. Other comments

Do you have any other comments on the draft NSW Water Strategy?

9. How did you hear about the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft NSW Water Strategy?

Please select all that apply from the list below:

- Newspaper
- Radio
- Department of Planning, Industry and Environment website
- Direct email
- Social media
- Have your say NSW website
- Word of mouth
- Other (please describe)

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