

Submission: Draft NSW Water Strategy

A robust updated guide for the use and management of NSW water resources is much needed. The Draft NSW Water Strategy vision for "sustainable water resources for thriving people, places and ecosystems, both now and for future generations" is thus to be welcomed as a step forward in this direction. The Principles as set out in the NSW Water Management Act 2000 provide a clear direction for governance: however, to date many practices have fallen far short of delivery. It is appreciated that the Draft acknowledges much yet still remains to be done.

The recent high rainfall events resulting in extensive flooding have further added to the urgency of better linking government's water management strategies with other agencies and local government (page 12) but detailed ways in which this will be rolled out are thin. Also, while there is reference to the need for coordination at catchment and landscape level exactly how this would manifest is unclear.

It would be possible, but tedious, to critique this many paged document in detail. There are some good and positive aspects which merit strong support, notably respect for the rights and involvement of First Nation peoples. There are also some anomalies; and many aspects that are not spelt out, such as how to evaluate the environmental implications of proposed actions and then secure resources for implementation for those that are approved.

The seven 'priorities' are really a package of actions that complement each other, and all dependant on river, floodplain and aquifer ecosystem health and system connectivity. Time frames for achievement are needed; and recognition that the rules adopted for managing and sharing water are not only legal and complied with but also based on sound ecological advice with moderate to good expectations of achievement: good process alone will not cut it.

As someone with many years involvement in pressing for water reform water I submit that this Draft disappointingly fails to address ways to deliver the required paradigm shift of understanding that all life depends on the ecological parameters of water in the environment; and, accordingly, that until and unless the value of water in the environment is recognised the proposed strategies will be unable to deliver the outcomes aspired to.

The very recent release of the ACCC report on water trading reinforces my concern. It should be noted here that in the late 1990s/early 2000s as water trading developed, a report by Marsden Jacobs made clear that to safeguard environmental obligations would be a challenge under a market forces regime which treats water as a 'highest value' commodity measured in \$\$ terms.

Despite some of the good proposals in this document, I am not alone in being very tired at still having to battle through presentations and obfuscation at so-called consultations, as for example over issues of floodplain harvesting in the Murray Darling Northern Basin. The aim to build community confidence and capacity through engagement, transparency and accountability is important but trust in decision makers also depends on real progress towards delivering on a vision that values water in the landscape for its intrinsic worth, and not only its \$ value as a commodity.

The above is submitted by myself, [REDACTED], as an individual.
I am happy for the submission to be made public, subject to removal of my personal details.
I am aware of Strategy development through my interest in water reform issues, from the DPIE website, and from personal discussion.
I am happy to be contacted if necessary.

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