

Dept Planning, Industry and Environment  
Locked Bag 5022  
Parramatta NSW 2124  
[water.relations@dpie.nsw.gov.au](mailto:water.relations@dpie.nsw.gov.au)

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## SUBMISSION: Comments about the review of the NSW Water Act 2014

I wish to make a few responses in regard to the key questions raised as part of this review. This submission will concentrate on answering three key questions including the broader context of responsible water management in NSW.

### Purpose of the Review

I understand the review may contribute to the development of broader reforms in the water sector to improve the sector's strategic planning, delivery of infrastructure.

I found the political announcements to fast-track large new instream storage construction outside the development of a State Water Strategy totally bewildering and shows a lack of understanding about projects of this type.

- Dams take considerable time to build and become operational-beyond the time frame of the drought that was occurring
- Dams have a range of potential impacts. The environmental impact don't simply occur instream. They include the floodplain and riparian wetlands. The social impacts are beyond the immediate footprint of construction and extend to downstream users
- Once in place a Dam is long term infrastructure- so building these things has profound effects through time

Given the likelihood, scale and profound nature of these works- what part of due diligence process would necessitate the need to fast track them? I would suggest it has fundamentally planning's inability to incorporate recent inflows coming into these rivers because they are seen as some anomaly and that the 'drought of record' for such planning not be selective but more inclusive of events as they occur.

### Do the policy objectives of Water NSW remain fit for purpose?

The current principal objectives of Water NSW under the Act are:

- (a) to capture, store and release water in an efficient, effective, safe and financially responsible manner, and
- (b) to supply water in compliance with appropriate standards of quality, and

(c) to ensure that declared catchment areas and water management works in such areas are managed and protected so as to promote water quality, the protection of public health and public safety, and the protection of the environment, and  
(d) to provide for the planning, design, modelling and construction of water storages and other water management works, and  
(e) to maintain and operate the works of WaterNSW efficiently and economically and in accordance with sound commercial principles.

I would rather they include 'triple bottom line' considerations and include environmental considerations such as the maintenance river and riparian health downstream of the dams.

This will have a flow effect of making make operational issues already in place- such as transparent/translucent flows and the management of PEW make sense in terms of planning logic.

[Does the Act need to be more or less prescriptive about WaterNSW's operations?](#)

I think it is simply sensible management to link performance standards to the operating licence. As the saying goes "*you can't manage what you can't measure*"

Moreover water is fundamentally an environmental asset

So the functions of the Act, the conferred functions, the purpose of the operating licence and the area of operations must not only be inclusive of the environment. But management performance and the ability to implement adaptive management processes would mean having standards for performance - including environmental performance

Yours faithfully

*J Howard*

J L Howard