

## Regional Water Strategies Cultural Options Submission Questionnaire

*The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) wish to acknowledge and pay their respect to all Traditional Owners and their Nations. The contributions of earlier generations, including the Elders, who have fought for their rights in natural resource management, are also valued and respected.*

The NSW Government is taking action to improve the security, reliability, quality and resilience of the state's water resources. The North Coast Regional Water Strategy will deliver healthy and resilient water resources for a liveable and prosperous regional NSW.

Regional water strategies are being developed by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and provides an opportunity to re-shape what we are doing in regional water management and chart a path forward.

We have been working with local water utilities, councils, communities, Aboriginal people and other stakeholders to ensure local and traditional knowledge informs draft regional water strategies and that it serves the regional community, including First Nations, the environment and industry.

### Your voice is important

We have prepared this draft strategy to continue our discussions with you. We would like to hear your views on:

- the draft strategy overall
- the process we used to develop the strategy
- potential cultural options for the North Coast region
- whether you have any further information that could help us develop cultural options for North Coast communities.

Please provide your feedback in the submission form below and email your completed submission to [regionalwater.strategies@dpi.e.nsw.gov.au](mailto:regionalwater.strategies@dpi.e.nsw.gov.au) or post to Regional Water Strategies, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124 **by 16 May, 2021.**

The questionnaire includes general questions about the regional water strategy including objectives, vision, modelling, and what we have heard so far. It also includes questions regarding the draft cultural options developed for some inland water strategy regions as a starting point for the development of cultural options in the North Coast. The questionnaire also includes personal information questions.

The questionnaire 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.

## 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 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.

**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 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.  
<https://www.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

**Email address\***

**Name\***

**Address\***

**Contact phone number\***

# Submission Form for Aboriginal Communities



## Draft Regional Water Strategy – Submission Form

**Do you identify as an Aboriginal person?**

Yes

No

**Which nation(s) do you represent?**

**Are you making this submission as an individual or as a representative of an organisation?\***

Individual

Organisation

### 3. Organisation or business details

**Who do you represent?**

Government (please specify)

Commonwealth

New South Wales

State other

Local

Local Aboriginal Land Council

Local Water Utility

Peak representative organisation (please specify)

Environment

Industry

Business group or business chamber

Community organisation

Other (please specify)

### 4. North Coast Regional Water Strategy workshops

**Did you attend a North Coast Regional Water Strategy workshop?\***

Yes

No

**Which workshop location did you attend?**

### 5. Draft regional water strategy objectives and vision

There are 13 strategies (12 regional water strategies and a Greater Sydney Water Strategy) being developed by the department. All regional water strategies are being developed in line with the following objectives:

- Deliver and manage water for local communities
  - Improve water security, water quality and flood management for regional towns and communities
- Enable economic prosperity
  - Improve water access reliability for regional industries
- Recognise and protect Aboriginal water rights, interests and access to water
  - Including Aboriginal heritage assets
- Protect and enhance the environment
  - Improve the health and integrity of environmental systems and assets, including by improving water quality
- Affordability
  - Identify least cost policy and infrastructure options

All draft regional water strategy options need to address at least one of the above objectives.

Our vision for the North Coast Regional Water Strategy is to have healthy and resilient water resources (that withstand extreme events and adapt to these changes) for a liveable and prosperous region.

To achieve this, we need to position the region so there is the right amount of water of the right quality, delivered in the right way to meet the future needs of Aboriginal people, towns, communities, industries and the environment.

#### Do you support the vision for the North Coast draft Regional Water Strategy?

Yes

No

If no, please outline your vision for the long-term management of water resources in this region?

### 6. Information and modelling used to develop regional water strategies

The North Coast Regional Water Strategy packages the most up to date information and evidence with all the tools we have – cultural, policy, planning, behavioural, regulatory, technology and infrastructure solutions.

We have used the following information to develop the North Coast Regional Water Strategy:

- New climate data
  - Observed historical climate data – recorded rainfall, temperature and evaporation data
  - Paleoclimate data – scientific reconstructed data using sources such as tree rings
  - Climate drivers – key drivers of wet and dry periods
  - Climate change scenarios
- Review of existing studies – to identify drivers and risks for water resource management
- Community engagement
  - Local councils and joint council organisations
  - Aboriginal peak bodies and Aboriginal community groups
  - Review of previous water management consultations.

#### A. Do you have any comments about the information used to develop this the North Coast Regional Water Strategy?

#### B. Please provide details if there is additional information you think we should also consider.

### 7. Opportunities and challenges for cultural water management in the region

In the second half of 2020 the department began initial conversations with communities in the North Coast region. In these conversations a number of opportunities, risks and challenges for cultural water management were identified. Some of these are listed below:

#### Opportunities

- Recognising the importance of cultural heritage, including access to and protection of cultural heritage sites.
  - Understanding the importance of accessing water for cultural and recreational purposes including fishing, swimming, teaching younger generations and reconnecting as a community.
- Shared story telling about river systems and recording of stories
- Increased focus on river repair not just river maintenance
- Aboriginal people working alongside scientists in assessing river health and sustainability
  - Take young people out on Country with Elders and scientists working together to foster ongoing partnerships and shared learning
- Business ventures and employment opportunities
  - River rangers, ecotourism and education
  - Use Aboriginal venues and catering to support meetings

#### Risks and challenges

- River health
  - Vegetation loss and ecosystem changes
  - Decline in river species
  - Water quality
- Perceived lack of outcomes from previous government-led engagement activities
  - Culturally appropriate engagement and partnerships are essential.
- Lack of awareness of cultural water access licences and native title rights to water
  - Understanding why cultural water access licenses cannot be traded while commercial licenses can.

#### A. Do you have any comments on the opportunities, risks and challenges identified to date?

**B. Please list any other opportunities you would like to see included in the North Coast Regional Water Strategy.**

**C. Are there any additional opportunities, risks and challenges that we should consider? What options could address these?**

## 8. Draft cultural options for regional water strategies

Draft cultural options for North Coast communities have not been developed and we are keen to hear your views on potential water management options that you consider important for this region. In consultation with local communities in some inland regions we have developed ten (10) cultural options for inclusion in the inland regional water strategies that went on public exhibition in September 2020. Below is a summary of the inland options that may provide a guide to developing options for the North Coast region.

Inland Option Name	Brief Description
1. River Ranger Program	Investigate options to establish an Aboriginal River Ranger Program to assist in maintaining the health and management of rivers and wetlands in the region. This role could be involved in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• pest management (fish and weeds)</li><li>• remediation and mitigation of impacts on waterways</li><li>• restocking native fish and vegetation species</li><li>• protecting and managing riparian zones along waterways.</li></ul>
2. Secure flows for water-dependent cultural sites	This option would consider options for providing regular flows to culturally important sites.
3. Culturally appropriate water knowledge program	Options to develop a culturally appropriate water management program to increase the capacity of Aboriginal people across the region so that they can more effectively participate in negotiations on water management and policy related matters that affect them.

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Inland Option Name	Brief Description
4. Water-dependent cultural practice and site identification	Options for Aboriginal people to classify and map water-dependent cultural sites. This would include identification and mapping of cultural sites, places of spiritual significance and places used by Aboriginal people for traditional and contemporary uses such as hunting, recreation and cultural uses.
5. Shared benefit project (environment and cultural outcomes)	Investigation of opportunities for shared benefits from using water for the environment to also achieve cultural outcomes. The aim of this option is to support and incorporate traditional Aboriginal ecological knowledge into water management action plans for the environment and support the cultural connection of Aboriginal people to water-sustained environments.
6. Aboriginal cultural water access licence review	Review of the Aboriginal cultural water access licence provisions for Aboriginal cultural uses to determine their effectiveness and identify opportunities for improvement. This option aims to optimise water sharing mechanisms that support cultural values.
7. Water portfolio project for Aboriginal communities	Funding to support Aboriginal people to purchase water entitlements and infrastructure (such as pumps) to secure access to water for spiritual cultural, social, environmental and economic purposes and open up opportunities for investment in water-dependent initiatives and cultural projects.
8. Co-management investigation of Travelling Stock Reserves	Investigation of opportunities to improve the involvement of Aboriginal people in the co-management of Travelling Stock Reserves that connect Aboriginal people to waterways and other water-dependent sites of cultural importance. The option aims to improve access to waterway and other water-dependent sites of cultural importance and to support the involvement of Aboriginal people in decisions that affect them.
9. Regional Aboriginal water Advisory Committee	Establish an Aboriginal Water Advisory Committee to improve the ability of Aboriginal people across the region to have a unified voice on water matters that affect them and their communities.
10. Regional Cultural Water Officer employment program	Investigate models for establishing Cultural Water Officer roles to assist with engaging Aboriginal people regarding water management. This option aims to improve awareness and involvement of local Aboriginal people in the management of water resources across the region and enable Aboriginal people to use their local knowledge and skills to assist in decisions about water use and management.

### A. Do you think any of the ten (10) inland cultural options could benefit you and your community?

Please list the option numbers and why you think it should be included.

## B. Are there additional options that we should consider?

## 9. Option combinations

There may be opportunities to combine options. This is dependent on associated works of options and further assessments and/or legislative, policy and planning changes to ensure they address the risks and challenges identified.

**Do you have any thoughts on how any of the ten (10) options could be combined?**

## 10. Other comments

**Do you have any other comments about the North Coast Regional Water Strategy?**

### 11. How did you hear about the Public Exhibition of this strategy?

We are interested to know how you heard about the opportunity to make a submission. Please indicate the communication methods below:

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

### 12. Additional information

If you would like to provide any supporting documents to help us understand your feedback, please email these from the same email you provided in this form or attach supporting documents to this form if you are returning your submission by mail.

All submissions on the draft Regional Water Strategy will be reviewed following the public exhibition period. Further targeted engagement will be undertaken along with the final phase of stakeholder engagement later in the year to review the final documents.



**Please email your completed submission and any supporting documents to [regionalwater.strategies@dpie.nsw.gov.au](mailto:regionalwater.strategies@dpie.nsw.gov.au) or**



**Post to Regional Water Strategies, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124 by 16 May, 2021.**



Further details on all regional water strategies can be found on our website <https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/regional-water-strategies>

**Thank you for your submission.**

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