

Lower Hunter Water Security Plan engagement overview



Hunter Water is working with the NSW Government, key stakeholders and the community to review the Lower Hunter Water Security Plan (LHWSP) to ensure our region has a resilient water system, now and for future generations.

We have undertaken a comprehensive review to ensure a sustainable and resilient water supply to support future growth and in an increasingly uncertain climate. Our plan for the future has been underpinned by community views and reflects our community's values and preferences.

Engagement overview

Our engagement program to understand our community's values and preferences was a key part of our long-term planning. Since 2018, a wide range of communications and engagement tools and techniques were used to ensure there were a variety of opportunities for the community to provide feedback at multiple stages throughout the review. A dedicated Your Voice webpage provided regular updates to the community and was used to undertake online activities. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, aspects of our engagement program were redesigned in 2020/21 with some face-to-face consultation replaced with virtual, online and other contactless methods.

Social media across our channels received:



We held a series of deliberative forums in 2018 (values and water use) and 2019 (option types)

153 community members



38

people participated in focus groups about Purified Recycled Water for drinking (PRW)



Hunter Water attended nine community events and engaged with about

640 people about the LHWSP



67

Schools received LHWSP video



Two information sessions about dam investigation areas were attended by almost

70 property owners and interested community members



7

focus groups with non-residential customers



5,467

visits to the LHWSP Your Voice webpage



Establishment of a LHWSP Community Liaison Group with

15 Representatives from stakeholder organisations & groups



1,100+

people participated in our online community survey



880

people completed a voting activity/survey on values and option preferences at community events and on the Your Voice webpage

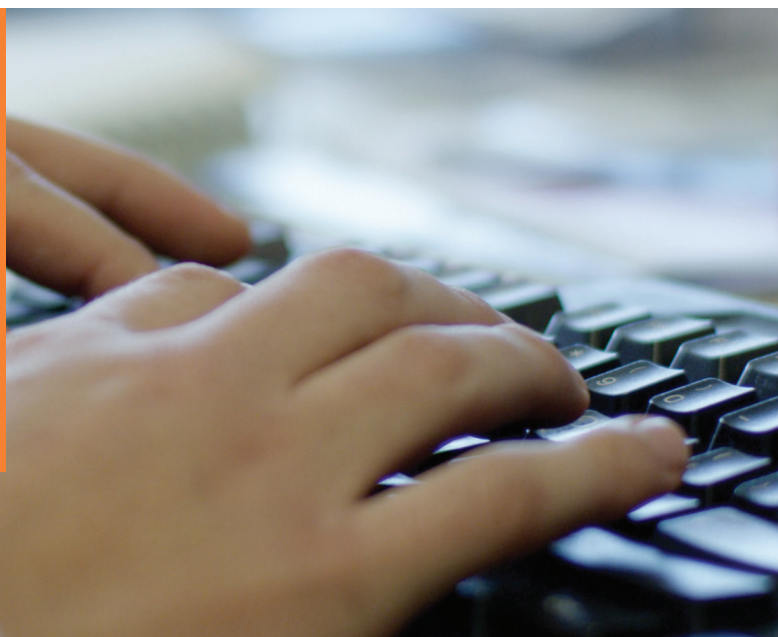


Find out more at hunterwater.com.au

Summary of community feedback

Feedback received over the past three years is summarised and presented thematically below incorporating online, deliberative forum, face-to-face and focus group feedback.

Deliberative forum and survey reports are available at yourvoice.hunterwater.com.au/water-future



Lower Hunter Water Security Plan

How community views informed our decision making

2018 Phase 1	What we did <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliberative forums • Online surveys • Surveys at events • Stakeholder engagement 	What we learned <p>Community values and aspirations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water quality • Reliability of water supply • Environment <p>Community stance on restrictions and expected levels of service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The community strongly supported restrictions during a drought and supported Hunter Water's stages of restrictions 	How we incorporated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community values underpinned the goals and objectives of the LHWSP • Learnings from this stage were key inputs into the LHWSP decision support framework as well as trade-offs between objectives
2019 2020 Phase 2	What we did <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliberative forums • Online surveys • Surveys at events • Established LHWSP Community Liaison Group • Community drop in sessions • Stakeholder engagement 	What we learned <p>Community views on supply and demand side options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members have said they are quite open to us considering all options to secure our water future, but prefer options that reduce reliance on drinking water over options that supplement our water supplies 	How we incorporated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporated into the development of preliminary portfolios
2020 2021 Phase 3	What we did <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online surveys • Ongoing meetings with LHWSP Community Liaison Group • Focus groups • Video presentations for high schools • Face to face focus group discussions with stakeholder groups 	What we learned <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community preferences for preliminary portfolios • How the community trades off objectives • Community preferences for recycled water/stormwater harvesting and water conservation programs • Views on the level of service the community expects from us 	How we incorporated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community feedback was considered alongside other ongoing investigations, modelling and analysis to inform the supply and demand options included in the revised LHWSP



COMMUNITY VALUES AND ASPIRATIONS

In the initial stages of community engagement, we learned water quality is their most important consideration when it comes to our water supply. The community also told us reliability of water supply is important, closely followed by environmental sustainability and affordability.

Feedback consistently indicated our community wanted future planning now, to reduce the risk of needing emergency drought response

measures in the future. There was also strong support for water restrictions being introduced in times of drought and for investment to be able to supply enough water to meet minimum customer demands in a long and severe drought. Our community prefers us to invest in measures to reduce demand and make the best use of our existing resources before investing in new supplies.

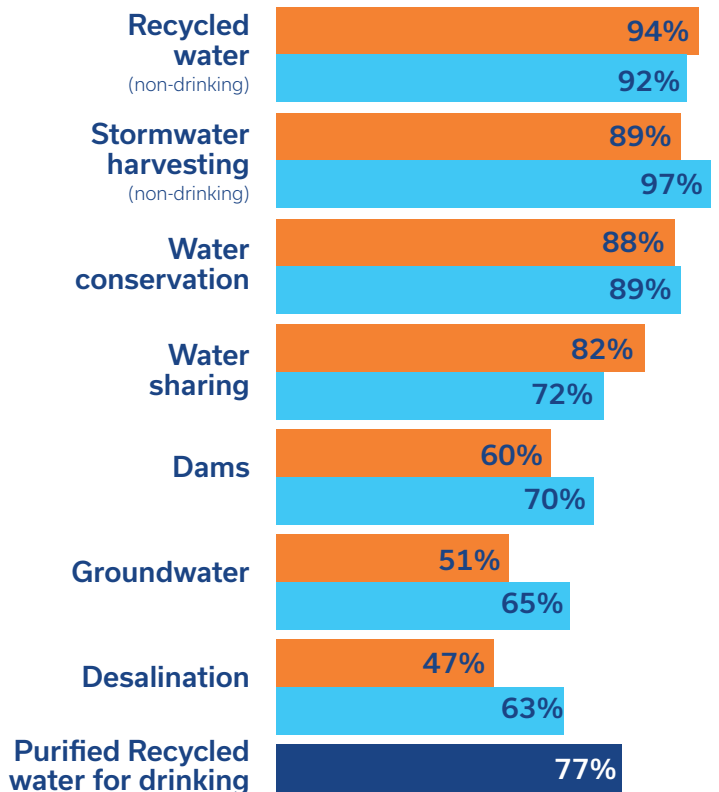


OPTIONS PREFERENCES

The LHWSP has considered all water supply and demand options. We asked our community their views and preferences across eight different option types (presented below), and how open they were to us considering them as part of our long-term water plan.

The results were relatively consistent over time, with the community telling us they are quite open to considering all options. Options that reduce our demand for drinking water, such as water conservation, recycled water and stormwater harvesting for non-drinking purposes were strongly supported by our community. We also held a series of focus groups and in-depth interviews with residents in the Lower Hunter and members of the LHWSP community liaison group on their perceptions of PRW which found that 85 per cent of participants were quite open to Hunter Water considering this option.

% open to consideration of that option



- n = 50 people completing survey on Your Voice webpage Apr-Oct 2020
- n = 153 deliberative forum participants, June 2019
- n = 880 people completing a voting activity/survey on option preferences at community events and on the Your Voice webpage in 2019 and 2020 (to 30 Oct 2020).



PRELIMINARY PORTFOLIOS

We assessed the options across a range of key criteria based on current industry knowledge and community values. The exploration of options ensured we understood the environmental and social aspects, the technical feasibility and costs of each, as well as the reliability that each option adds to our water system. This helped us compare the options and develop 'portfolios' or groups of options for detailed analysis.

Seven preliminary portfolios were presented to the community in an online survey in late 2020. In line with feedback from our community, we included water conservation, storm water harvesting and recycled water for non-drinking in all preliminary portfolios.

The portfolios were aligned with four investment strategies:

- making the most of what we've got
- a mix of regional water storage and rainfall independence
- rainfall independence
- increasing our storage buffer

There was a relatively high level of community support for all seven portfolios presented (all over 60% support). This was similar to previous results regarding supply and demand option preferences; the community was quite open to us considering all options.

NB. The preliminary portfolios were refined based on the results of community feedback and further technical analysis

		Demand Programs	Supply Programs	
			Progress now	Progress later
Making the most of what we've got	<div><div>69%</div><div>Portfolio 1</div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
	<div><div>70%</div><div>Portfolio 2</div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
A mix of regional water storage and rainfall independence	<div><div>73%</div><div>Portfolio 3</div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
	<div><div>68%</div><div>Portfolio 4</div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
Rainfall independence	<div><div>66%</div><div>Portfolio 5</div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
Increasing our storage buffer	<div><div>61%</div><div>Portfolio 6</div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
	<div><div>61%</div><div>Portfolio 7</div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
		<div><div></div><div>Recycled Water and Stormwater harvesting</div></div>	<div><div></div><div>Water Conservation</div></div>	<div><div></div><div>Water Sharing between regions</div></div>
		<div><div></div><div>Dams</div></div>	<div><div></div><div>Desalination</div></div>	<div><div></div><div>Purified Recycling Water for drinking</div></div>

The % is a measure of the overall strength of the decision, considering both support and conflict and identifies the options with the least polarisation. * Dark blue icons for water conservation and recycling represent fixed higher levels of investment. The dam in portfolio 6 is an on-river dam at Upper Chichester. The Dam in portfolio 7 is an off-river dam at Limeburners Creek.



ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS

The community told us that environmental sustainability is important to them and they are willing to pay more to reduce potential environmental impacts.

We therefore included measures to reduce the carbon footprint through the purchase of renewable energy for high energy options such as desalination in our preliminary portfolios. We also included additional biodiversity protection and enhancement measures beyond mandatory requirements under legislation for portfolios that include new dam options.

Online survey results and discussions with non-residential customers indicates broad support for additional investments to achieve environmental goals for biodiversity and greenhouse gas emissions.



Deliberative Forum Maitland, June 2019



HOW THIS HAS INFORMED OUR PLAN

Water security is a major driver for investment decisions. Our community has made it clear that we should ensure we can supply their water needs through a long and severe drought.

Over the three years that we've been engaging with our community and the non-residential sector we've learned that our community seeks:

- a safe and reliable water supply that can withstand drought
- consideration of all options
- investments to reduce demand for drinking water
- investments to minimise the environmental impacts of water supply initiatives
- a collaborative approach with stakeholders to support delivery of water efficiency and alternative water supply outcomes
- continued implementation of water restrictions in times of drought and permanent water conservation measures
- up front water security investments as opposed to acting reactively during drought.

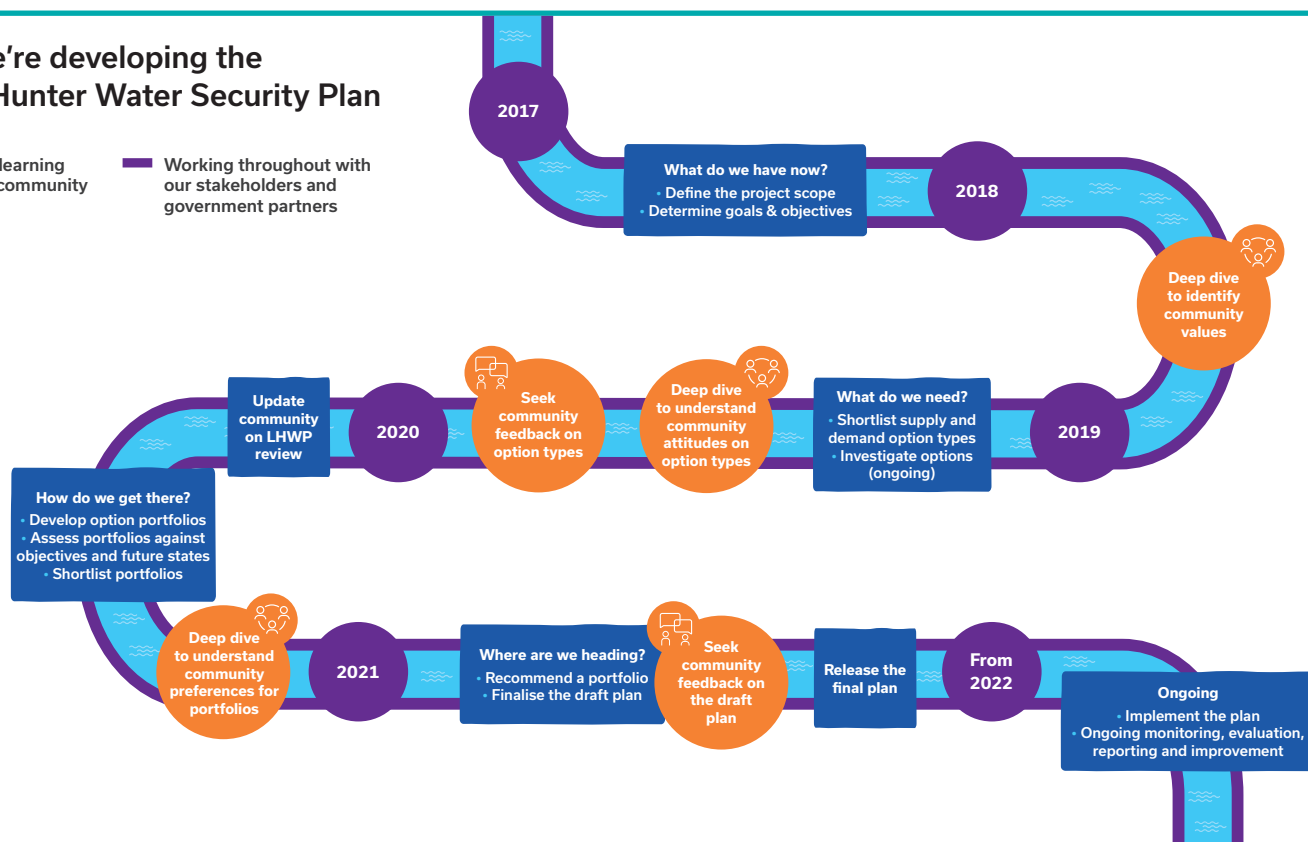
To ensure that community values and aspirations are represented in the plan we have included actions to:

- continue investments in catchment management and protection
- continue to invest in reducing leakage and helping our customers conserve water
- continue to work with customers and stakeholders to facilitate investments in viable recycled water schemes
- collaborate with stakeholders to deliver integrated water management solutions and liveable communities
- consider the use of renewable energy or carbon offsets to reduce the environmental footprint of the desalination plant
- deliver supply options that have broad community support
- provide ongoing robust and rigorous community engagement opportunities.

How we're developing the Lower Hunter Water Security Plan

● Ongoing learning with our community

■ Working throughout with our stakeholders and government partners



Find out more

To stay up to date as the LHWSP progresses,
 Visit yourvoice.hunterwater.com.au/water-future
 Email LHWSP@hunterwater.com.au
 Phone 1300 657 657 (business hours)

