



25 October 2021

BIG TICK FROM LOWER HUNTER COMMUNITY ON DRAFT WATER SECURITY PLAN

The Lower Hunter community has resoundingly backed the draft Lower Hunter Water Security Plan (LHWSP), with 69 per cent of respondents to a guided submission survey during the public exhibition period supporting the proposed approach.

The whole-of-government plan was on public exhibition for seven weeks from 9 August seeking community and stakeholder feedback with 210 submissions received. The public exhibition period included numerous presentations to community groups and stakeholder organisations, a public webinar, and a summary of the plan sent to 235,000 houses across the region encouraging feedback.

Minister for Water, Property and Housing, Melinda Pavey, said preliminary results show the community supports the draft LHWSP and its principles, priorities and actions.

“The community’s strong endorsement of the draft Plan, a foundation for the region’s economic development, inspires confidence in the future direction of Greater Newcastle and the Hunter for the 40-year life of the plan.

“I’m grateful to the Lower Hunter community for participating in the in-depth engagement process over more than three years as we now have a rigorous, comprehensive plan to underpin the region’s growth, liveability and quality of life,” Mrs Pavey said.

Hunter Water Managing Director, Darren Cleary, said the community had overwhelmingly backed water conservation and reducing leaks as actions in the draft Plan.

“To see all proposed LHWSP actions supported and a huge 97 per cent support from the community for water conservation and leakage reduction actions is testament to how highly our community values water. Our region is more vulnerable to drought than previously thought so it’s crucial we all love water and keep our storages fuller for longer.

“We know external shocks like drought require us to improve the resilience of the water supply system and, at 85 per cent support, the community clearly backs this Priority. We will work to meet expectations of a reliable water supply to withstand drought to ensure ongoing regional prosperity and benefit to the unique Lower Hunter environment,” Mr Cleary said.

The survey results show that community support for each of the LHWSP principles and priority areas was greater than 79 per cent. Two-thirds of respondents accepted that increased water security requires Hunter Water to make investments that are likely to increase annual residential customer bills by between \$75 and \$120 on average (between six and nine per cent for the average residential customer).

Hunter Water with the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment continues to review and consider all submissions and matters raised during the public exhibition period. We will report back to the community with further detail about what people valued and what concerned them by the end of the year.

The final Plan is expected to be published in early 2022.

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