

23 May 2022

Professor Hugh Durrant-Whyte
Natural Resources Commission
Water Review Team
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001
Email: nrc@nrc.nsw.gov.au

Dear Professor Durrant-Whyte,

Re: Review of the *Water Sharing Plan for the Lachlan Unregulated River Water Sources 2012 (the Plan)*

Central Tablelands Water (CTW) welcomes the opportunity to participate in the review process for the *Water Sharing Plan for the Lachlan Unregulated River Water Sources 2012 (the Plan)*.

As background information, Central Tablelands Water (CTW) is a County Council proclaimed in 1944, which currently provides quality drinking water to approximately 15,000 consumers across the local government areas of Blayney, Cabonne, Weddin, Cowra and Bland. An emergency bi-directional pipeline was also commissioned in 2019, linking CTW and Orange City Council water filtration plants to further assist with regional water security.

CTW is also an associate member of the Central NSW Joint Organisation (CNSWJO), and as such has contributed to and supports the CNSWJO submission for the Plan review.

As a regional water authority responsible for town water supply, CTW is a strong advocate for the social objectives of the Plan, and in particular maintaining and improving the following:

- *access to water for town water supply, and*
- *water quality for town water supply.*

After advocating to both State and Federal governments in excess of 20 years for increased water security for our Central West region, joint funding has been secured to develop a final business case that will include the assessment of both the Lake Rowlands to Carcoar Dam pipeline project and the Lake Rowlands Dam Augmentation project. Lake Rowlands is owned and operated by CTW, whilst Carcoar Dam is owned and operated by WaterNSW.

To reflect this close alignment between both projects, the Lake Rowlands to Carcoar pipeline project and the Lake Rowlands Augmentation project has been renamed the Belubula Water Security Project. This vital regional water security project, is being delivered by Water Infrastructure NSW (DPE Water) together with CTW and WaterNSW as key stakeholders.

The business case will be subject to a detailed options analysis consistent with the Infrastructure NSW Infrastructure Investor Assurance Framework. This analysis will review the project, along with potential additional options to improve the efficiency and resilience of water management within the Belubula Valley.

If the government(s) supports the outcomes of the final business case to proceed with construction and Lake Rowlands is augmented (i.e. capacity increased from 4.5GL up to 26.5GL), it is imperative that the Plan:

- enables a flexible mechanism for local water utilities such as CTW to increase its water access licence limit accordingly, as opposed to having to wait for the next review of the Plan; and
- clarifies unambiguously that town water supplies have the highest priority of allocation amongst all other high security licences.

Of course, any future increase to CTW's water access licence would also include a subsequent increase to environmental flows to partially mitigate alterations to natural flow regimes in the Belubula Valley. This would continue to satisfy the Plan's environmental objective *to protect, and contribute to the enhancement of the longitudinal and lateral connectivity within and between water sources to support target ecological processes.*

CTW, in collaboration with Cabonne Council and Orange City Council is also developing a Sub-Regional Town Water Strategy in accordance with the DPE Water Regional Town Water Strategy (RTWS) framework. The outcomes of this strategy will provide guidance for the individual local water utility's strategic and long-term planning for water infrastructure, aligning with sub-regional objectives such as strengthening drought resilience.

According to the DPE Water RTWS framework, the key outcomes, deliverable and objectives are as follows:

- The key outcomes are to:
“Ensure urban communities that would benefit from across Local Water Utility (LWU) boundaries interconnected town water supply systems have been identified, assessed and the benefits to each LWU and community are quantified.”

- The key deliverable of a RTWS is a:

“Regional Town Water Strategy, including water security deficiencies, potential water scheme linkages across LWU boundaries and identification of preferred options for further development.”

- The RTWS is a key strategic document which:

“needs to take account of, and be consistent with any applicable regional water strategy, water sharing plans and water resource plans. The Regional Town Water Strategy should align with other joint initiatives developed by the relevant Joint Organisation (JO), and with regional plans developed by the department’s Planning & Assessment Group.”

Although the existing bi-directional pipeline between CTW and Orange City Council already links the Lachlan and Macquarie catchments, the Sub-Regional Town Water Strategy will further support the linkage. To date, there has been no transfer of water between the catchments using the existing bi-directional pipeline. However, it is vital that rules are developed in consultation with key stakeholders via the water sharing plans to allow the movement of water across catchments. The ability to transfer water between catchments is critical during times of drought, LWU emergencies and managing storages.

On behalf of CTW, I would like to thank you once again for inviting CTW to participate in the review of the Plan. If you require any further clarification regarding the information provided in this submission, please do not hesitate to contact [REDACTED]

Yours faithfully,

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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]