



Nature Conservation Council

The voice for nature in NSW

1 May 2022

[Natural Resources Commission](#)

GPO Box 5341
Sydney, NSW 2001

By email: nrc@nrc.nsw.gov.au

To whom it may concern,

**Submission to NRC review of the
Macquarie Bogan Unregulated Rivers Water Sources 2012**

The Nature Conservation Council of New South Wales (NCC) is the state's peak environment organisation. We represent over 160 environment groups across NSW. Together we are dedicated to protecting and conserving the wildlife, landscapes and natural resources of NSW.

The Macquarie Bogan Unregulated Rivers Water Sources Water Sharing Plan 2012 (the WSP) covers the entire Macquarie and Bogan River catchments, excluding the area covered by the *Water Sharing Plan for the Macquarie and Cudgegong Regulated Rivers Water Source*.

The internationally significant Ramsar listed Macquarie Marshes is in the unregulated areas that are serviced by water that comes from the regulated area and there are areas in the Lower Macquarie unregulated areas that are listed as environmental and cultural assets against schedule 8 of the Basin Plan (areas of water-dependent priority environmental assets). The condition of the Macquarie Marshes has declined since the 1990's. In 2009 the Australian Government notified the Ramsar Convention of a likely change in ecological character.¹

With this environmental significance in mind, NCC offers the following response to the review questions:

1. To what extent do you feel the plan has contributed to environmental outcomes?

The WSP has failed to contribute to environmental outcomes because:

- water extraction is not assessed against limits.

¹ [Likely Change in Ecological Character of the Macquarie Marshes Ramsar Site Statement of Reasons Australian Government Dept of Environment Water Heritage and the Arts](#)



- flow regimes described in the Macquarie-Castlereagh Long Term Watering Plan (LTWP) that are required to come from the regulated system into the unregulated system to service the environmental and cultural assets in the Lower Macquarie must be protected under the WSP.

2. To what extent do you feel the plan has contributed to social outcomes?

The WSP has not meet the objective to “protect, preserve, maintain and enhance the Aboriginal, cultural and heritage values of this water source”.

The WSP does allow provisions for access to water for basic landholder rights and stock and domestic rights.

3. To what extent do you feel the plan has contributed to economic outcomes?

The WSP allows economic advantage to be gained by those upstream, as the extraction is not assessed for compliance against the extraction limits. The rights of water users downstream are eroded.

4. To what extent do you feel the plan has contributed to meeting its objectives?

The WSP has failed to meet environmental objective of the WSP - *to protect, and contribute to the enhancement of, the ecological condition of these water sources and their water-dependent ecosystems over the term of this Plan*. The extraction limit is not enforceable, therefore the protection of Planned Environmental Water cannot be ensured.

The WSP could improve on meeting its economic objectives - *to maintain, and where possible improve, access to water to optimise economic benefits for agriculture, surface water-dependent industries and local economies*. The rights of water users in the lower parts of the catchments could be eroded if over extraction occurs in the upper catchment.

The WSP has failed on meeting its objectives - *to maintain, and where possible improve, the spiritual, social, customary and economic values and uses of water by Aboriginal people*. There is no water for Native Title or cultural purposes active under the WSP.

5. What changes do you feel are needed to the water sharing plan to improve outcomes?

All steps required to ensure the extraction limit is complied with must be taken as a matter of priority.



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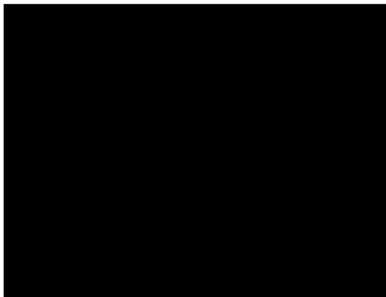
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Flow requirements from the regulated water source that have been identified in the LTWP for the health of the environmental and cultural assets in the lower sections of the unregulated water source must be protected from extraction.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the consultation.

Your key contact point for further questions and correspondence is [REDACTED]. We welcome further conversation on this matter.

Yours sincerely,



Nature Conservation Council