

COUNCIL CALLS FOR STRONGER REGIONAL WATER SECURITY IN BASIN PLAN REVIEW

Warren, NSW — Thursday 21 May 2026

Warren Shire Council has called for stronger protections for regional water security and critical human needs in its recent submission to the Murray–Darling Basin Plan Review.

The submission calls for practical, balanced decision-making that reflects the realities faced by Warren Shire and communities across the Macquarie Valley during prolonged drought conditions.

Mayor Greg Whiteley said water security is fundamental to safeguarding these communities, supporting local industry and securing the future of Western NSW.

“Protecting critical human needs must remain a central priority in Basin planning,” Mayor Whiteley said.

“That also means protecting the health of our rivers, creeks and the Macquarie Marshes.

“Our communities rely on the river system every day. They need confidence there’ll be reliable water available for their homes, businesses and stock, especially when drought hits.

“You can’t have strong regional communities without healthy river systems,” he said.

Council’s submission reflects broader concerns raised by the Alliance of Western Councils (AWC) that current Basin Plan settings whilst having more environmental water are failing to deliver reliable water security, community confidence or clear environmental outcomes for regional communities.

A key recommendation within the submission is investigating the strategic use of up to 20% of Burrendong Dam’s flood mitigation capacity during major inflow events to help strengthen drought resilience, support critical water flows and improve long-term water security for towns across the Macquarie River system, including Warren, Dubbo, Narromine, Trangie, Nyngan and Cobar.

The submission highlights several other priority areas, including:

- Protecting critical human needs during drought, including reliable access to water for towns, households, businesses and stock;
- Strengthening long-term regional water security and resilience across the Macquarie Valley;
- Avoiding a repeat of the environmental impacts experienced in the lower Macquarie during the 2017–2020 drought;
- Supporting reliable policy settings for agriculture, mining and regional employment;
- Continuing investment in critical water infrastructure, including weirs, recycling initiatives and fish ladders; and
- Improving coordination and consultation between governments, agencies, regional communities and local water experts to ensure Basin planning reflects practical local knowledge and on-ground experience.

Mayor Whiteley said regional communities and local Councils must have a stronger voice in future planning processes.

“Regional communities like Warren Shire understand the Basin environment because we live and work in it every day. That insight is invaluable,” Mayor Whiteley said.

“Policy works better when the people closest to the issue are involved from the start.

“We need to be looking at practical ways to strengthen drought resilience across the region and avoid repeating the impacts communities and river systems experienced during the 2017–2020 drought,” he said.

Council will continue working alongside the Alliance of Western Councils, the Commonwealth Government and the Murray–Darling Basin Authority to ensure regional perspectives inform future Basin planning and reform.

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