

December 2020

Planning for rainfall independent water supply

Illawarra desalination options update

Project background

The NSW Government is currently developing the Greater Sydney Water Strategy, a long-term plan to secure Greater Sydney's water supplies. WaterNSW, Sydney Water and the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment are investigating potential seawater desalination options for future water supplies in the Illawarra, as a key component of this responsible planning.

Between July 2017 and February 2020, Greater Sydney, including the Illawarra, experienced one of the worst drought sequences on record with storages depleting faster than ever before.

During the drought, it became apparent that the Illawarra has a more vulnerable water supply compared to the rest of the Greater Sydney region.

Desalination is a rainfall independent water supply option that would ensure a safe, secure and resilient water supply for the future in the Illawarra. Planning work includes the potential for a seawater desalination plant to provide a new source of supply to the Illawarra region.

Water supply and growth

The Illawarra region is a key contributor in powering the NSW economy. It was estimated that in 2017, the Illawarra contributed more than \$16 billion to the state's economy.

Major metropolitan centres, like the Illawarra, need water supply certainty so that businesses can continue to invest, plan ahead, generate economic growth and increase local employment.

Project benefits

- **Safe** – a new source of high-quality drinking water to supplement supply across the Illawarra region
- **Secure** – meeting the demands of a growing Illawarra
- **Resilient** – broader water security in drought and for the long term, alongside dams, water efficiency and recycling

Protecting the environment

WaterNSW is carrying out early planning work for an Illawarra desalination plant. If plans for a desalination plant in the Illawarra proceed to further stages, a rigorous and comprehensive environmental assessment process would be carried out.

As with the Sydney Desalination Plant at Kurnell and other desalination plants around Australia, should the project proceed to construction, work would be managed in accordance with stringent management plans to protect the environment, including the marine environment. These plans would be available for the community to view.

Wollongong supports

80,000 jobs  ↑

It is expected that by 2050, the Illawarra will be home to around 500,000 people.  ↑

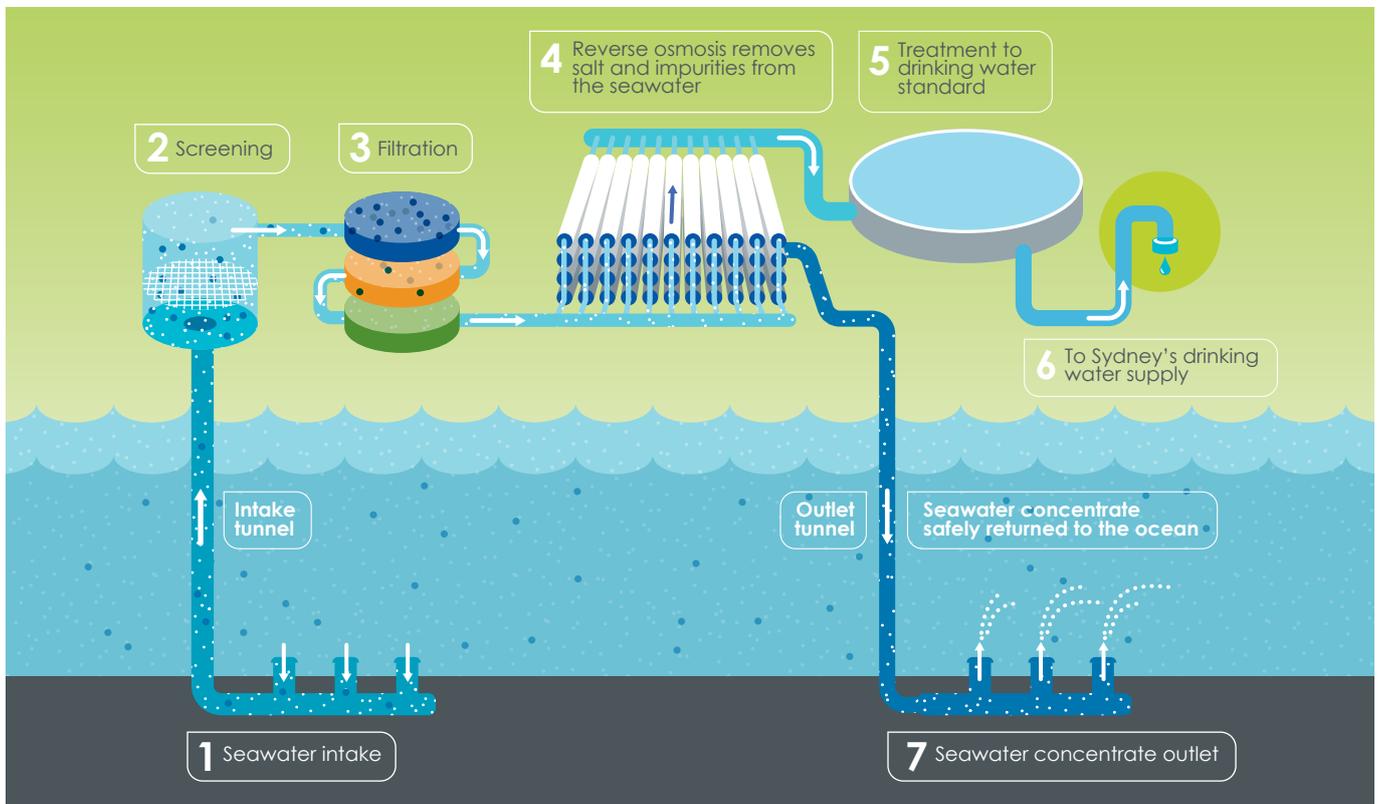
How desalination works

Desalination is a rainfall independent water supply option which is used globally and involves the process of taking salt out of the water in order to produce fresh water.

Drinking water which has been produced from desalination plants is monitored and tested and is

required to meet the standards of the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.

The diagram shows how a desalination plant works. White arrows indicate the direction of water flows.



Next steps

The NSW Government is continuing its work to develop the Greater Sydney Water Strategy.

The strategy will consider a range of water supply and demand options to safeguard Greater Sydney's water supply and is expected to be released for public consultation in mid to late 2021.

If desalination project planning and investigations in the Illawarra are progressed as part of the strategy, more information will be provided to the community.

Stay informed:

 **Call us on:**
1800 333 626

 **Email the project team at:**
desalinationproject@waternsw.com.au

 **Visit us online at:**
www.waternsw.com.au