

Macquarie Valley

Macquarie River Re-Regulating Storage Project

December 2019



Photo: Macquarie River near existing Gin Gin weir

Project background

WaterNSW has been engaged by the Department of Planning, Industry & Environment (the Department) on behalf of the NSW government to develop a Detailed Business Case for a proposed re-regulating storage on the Macquarie River. This follows recommendations by Infrastructure NSW in the 2014 State Infrastructure Strategy and WaterNSW's 20 Year Infrastructure Options Study.

The re-regulating storage, created through construction of a gated weir, will increase general security water availability (in line with strategic objectives set by the Department for the Macquarie Valley), improve delivery efficiency to customers downstream of Gin Gin Weir, and reduce transmission losses when transferring and delivering water through the system.

Options considered

During the early phases of this project, several options for the new weir location between Narromine and Warren were considered. Previous studies identified two feasible options for the new weir; downstream of the existing Gin Gin Weir and at a new location called Rocky Point, approximately 15 kilometres (km) upstream of Gin Gin weir. The new weir, yet to be named, will be subject to an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and will involve technical, hydrological, environmental, biodiversity, cultural and economic feasibility studies, and will involve stakeholder consultation, as part of developing the Detailed Business Case (DBC). Studies and consultation commenced in August 2019 and will continue through to mid 2020, when the Detailed Business Case is expected to be completed.

Project benefits

- Achieving long-term water security in the Macquarie Valley
- Improving delivery efficiency and aiding the ability to manage flows to customers downstream of Gin Gin
- Reducing transmission losses when transferring and delivering water through the river system on an annual basis
- Maximising available water for general security customers within the sustainable diversion limits set under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan

Aligning with Macquarie Regional Water Strategy

The project will be developed to align with the priorities of the Department's Macquarie Regional Water Strategy. The strategy identifies policy, planning and infrastructure options that deliver resilient water resources for all water users in the Macquarie Valley.

Studies in progress

Engineering and planning studies including field investigations and testing will continue in 2020 to support design and planning approvals for the preferred infrastructure construction.

Preferred location for the new weir

Multiple options were assessed by WaterNSW to improve regional water security and delivery efficiency in the Macquarie Valley. Two proposed sites for the construction of the weir included:

- **Option A** – Constructing a new gated weir and fish passage downstream of Gin Gin weir.
- **Option B** - Constructing a new gated weir and fish passage at the Rocky Point site, 15 km upstream of Gin Gin weir.

Desktop and field studies completed to support the project economically, environmentally and technically have identified Option A as the preferred and selected site for the construction of the new weir.



Option selection - why Option A?

A Multi-Criteria Assessment (MCA) process was used to assess possible locations and determine the preferred option. The MCA criteria considered:

- The Departments regional water strategy strategic objectives;
- Environmental, social, economic and construction risks/impacts of the preferred infrastructure option;
- Innovative and dynamic solution that meets the requirements of key stakeholders and mitigates biodiversity and ecological impacts;
- Benefits and impacts on the community, landowners, stakeholders and customers; and,
- Overall estimated cost of the project.

An assessment based on this criteria has determined the Gin Gin site as the preferred and selected location for the new weir.

WaterNSW investigated the upgrade of the existing weir at Gin Gin however due to the age of the structure it would not be able to meet modern standards in design and construction. The construction of a new weir downstream will mitigate these risks and provide an offset for the projected ongoing maintenance costs and capital investment to refurbish the existing weir. On balance, Option A was assessed as a higher value option against all other options. WaterNSW will continue to develop the project and address the requirements for fish passage, flood mitigation and social needs that will be assessed in detail as part of the planning and approval process.

Planning and engagement process

Comprehensive environmental and engineering studies will form part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Initial studies began in August 2019 with detailed investigations beginning in late September 2019 and continuing to mid 2020.

Community and stakeholder engagement will be conducted throughout the development of the DBC.

About the Environmental Impact Statement

The purpose of an EIS is to assess the economic, environmental and social impacts of a project. It provides a detailed technical review and assessment of the key issues attached to the project. The EIS enables the community, government agencies and the approval authority to make informed submissions or decisions on the merits of the project. Once the EIS is completed it will be publicly available for comment and review. Conditions are then placed on the project as part of the approval process, and generally based on submissions received. As the Macquarie Re-regulating Storage project is classified as State Significant Infrastructure, it requires approval from the NSW Minister for Planning in order for it to proceed. The main stages of the State Significant Infrastructure assessment process are:

- Early consultation;
- Preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement;
- Lodgment, public exhibition and review; and,
- Assessment and determination by the Minister for Planning.

Strategic priorities

- To improve and protect the health and integrity of environmental systems and assets, including improving water quality
- To improve water security, water quality, and flood management for our regional towns and communities
- To lower the impact to the health of our rivers, wetlands and floodplains, including protection of Indigenous heritage assets
- To enable economic prosperity and improve water access reliability for regional industries
- To identify the best value for money infrastructure options that provide the most community benefit
- To deliver the project within a 3 year timeframe

Your feedback

WaterNSW values all stakeholder and community input in assisting with developing this detailed business case.

Your comments are encouraged and can be sent to the email address below. All community input on the preferred option will be considered as part of the Environmental Impact Statement.

What will the EIS investigate?

The EIS investigates and identifies the potential impacts of the project during construction and operation of the new weir. It will also identify management and mitigation measures to reduce these identified impacts.

The assessment focuses on a number of key issues. These include (but are not necessarily limited to):

- Flora and fauna
- Aboriginal heritage
- Hydrology (including flood management)
- Social and economic impacts

Engagement to date

As part of preparing the EIS, WaterNSW have started engaging with stakeholders, including representatives from local government, Local Aboriginal Land Councils and other government agencies, as well as a number of community, environmental, angler and recreational groups. Early engagement with directly impacted landowners has also commenced.

Stay informed



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Call us on: **1300 662 077**



Email the project team at:

MRRRS@waternsw.com.au

Future engagement opportunities

Opportunities to stay informed and provide feedback will be available in the new year and will include; newsletters, community information sessions, static displays, feedback forms and stakeholder briefings.

To stay up to date with the project, please register your interest and contact details by emailing mrrrs@waternsw.com.au.

Macquarie River Re-regulating Storage Schedule

