

WARREN SHIRE COUNCIL

Delegates Report by the Mayor
to the Ordinary Meeting of Council held in the Council Chambers,
Warren on Thursday 28th February 2019

ITEM 3 WESTERN DIVISION COUNCILS OF NSW 2019 ANNUAL CONFERENCE (C14-5.4)

RECOMMENDATION

That the information be received and noted.

Day 1:

The conference was opened and the morning session included a range of speakers that included the Mayor of Bourke Shire Barry Hollman, Linda Scott LGNSW President, Robyn Hobbs OAM, NSW Small Business Commissioner and Mathew Dickerson, CEO Axxis Technology.

The important aspects of the morning session included:

Cr Linda Scott, LGNSW President advised;

- Funding of rates (up to 50%) for drought impacted shires.
- Discussion of Local Government and issues at a federal level and increased Federal Assistance Grants.
- Discussion around water funding, drought impacts and funding of communities.
- LGNSW is running a leaders debate in Sydney 8th March 2019 to ask questions on policies that Local Government cares about.
- LGNSW has developed an Election Priority Policy (copy available).
- Advice that NSW Labour has indicated that they will support \$900million in road funding and Nationals have identified \$500million in road funding and \$500 million in bridge repair funding. LGNSW is pushing to have funding as non-matched funding to allow Local Government to spend the money without a need for 3 government funding.
- LGNSW is pushing for longer term RMS Contracts for Councils to ensure that they have a consistency in staff levels rather than the current year to year funding.
- LGNSW is working to support recycling across NSW and the development of new waste industries from the NSW Government Waste Levy. LGNSW will host a recycling summit.
- LGNSW Renew Our Library campaign is being run with major political parties and support for funding is positive from the parties.
- LGNSW is working with the government to end cost shifting, to require councils who are disadvantaged to have higher levels of funding, To protect councils water and sewer schemes at a local level. That Local Government is treated equally with other levels of government, that Mayors and Councillors be provided with superannuation, and that skilled areas are supported with cadets, trainees and apprentices to develop long term employment, and are looking at skilled staff shortage (engineers and planners).
- That Councils are required to develop a 20 year Planning Statement by the Department of Planning and what is required by July 2020.

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Warren on Thursday 28th February 2019

ITEM 3 WESTERN DIVISION COUNCILS OF NSW 2019 ANNUAL CONFERENCE CONTINUED

- LGNSW are involved in small business support, child and preschool care and will look at aged care issues in Local Government.
- A range of grant programs are currently advertised.

Robyn Hobbs OAM, NSW Small Business Commissioner advised;

- That contract management is to protect small business and that the Act requires small business to be paid within 30 days by Government agencies including Local Government.
- That the Office of Small Business will work with Local Government to assist small business, especially where used as contractors for road construction.
- Easy To Do Business Councils (Warren included) to provide information and business support links to help business.
- Better payment terms - that any small business that contracts with NSW Government will be paid within 5 days and daily payments can be provided if registered. Would like to see Councils also make payments to small business in 5 days.
- Office will work with councils to have the State Government make payments within 5 days and they have requested advice from councils as to delays in payment of accounts e.g. RMS payments for road works.
- Small Business Conference in May 2019 and Mayor/General Manager have been sent complimentary tickets to encourage attendance.
- Drought support for small businesses - direct support has been provided to agricultural businesses (farms), but not to the small business in a town. The Office of Small Business is providing support to small business through taxation relief through the ATO and state agencies and deference of payments. Looking at different business strategies such as on-line marketing or business retention.
- A question was asked about three tiers of taxation based on locational factors? The Commissioner advised that they are looking at zonal taxation to support remote areas.

Mathew Dickerson, CEO Axxis Technology advised;

- Mathew talked about the use of social media in Local Government.
- That people are using social media to get their news (76% of people use Facebook regularly) and people check Facebook 8 times a day.
- 95% of people 12-24 use social media 89% 25-54 year olds and 57% over 55+ use social media.
- Councils need to improve their way of communicating to inform the public on all the good things they do and to improve the community engagement.
- Only put information on social media items that are relevant to the community and track the results of who is seeing it, what they say and how many people click on the item.

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ITEM 3 WESTERN DIVISION COUNCILS OF NSW 2019 ANNUAL CONFERENCE CONTINUED

- Get past your past - do not do it the same way we have done this for years. Look at other forms of media and target the audience e.g. free pool entry to 12-24 year olds. Use multiple stream of traditional and social media to get messages out.
- Set targets of how many people do you want on social media and email sites to post items.
- Use appropriate language to match the audience.
- Need to show Councillors what our current Facebook pages post and how we do business?
- Addressing negatives - respond to negative comments rapidly to ensure that the correct story is put forward. Block swearing, can block trolls on council's site only. Addressing issues on public sites may not be possible as they can block council but get the messaging right when responding.

Feergus O'Connor, Executive Director, Office of Emergency Management

The conference was advised;

- The role and function of the Office of Emergency Management.
- Planning for future disasters to allow councils to build capacity.
- Support is provided when a disaster occurs and assistance financially and operationally e.g. evacuation centres etc. and the recovery functions to work with councils to implement management strategies to get communities back on their feet.
- They run and fund exercises through the LEMC, run training courses face to face and on line.
- Assist councils to develop planning documents for disasters.
- Programs available.
- Disaster preparedness programs through LEMC to comply with legislation through the LEMO function by online tool kits, face to face training.
- Get Ready Workbooks - communications team role to communicate disaster events.
- Small Business Get Ready packages and how they can cope with local disasters.
- Training and exercise courses online e.g. introduction to emergency management etc on website. Courses are free.
- Grants Programs - to fund local volunteer groups and community organisations to build resilience e.g. first aid funding and childcare NGO's to be disaster ready.

The Hon. Peter Primrose MLC Shadow Minister for Local Government

The following items were presented;

- Gave a general overview of cost shifting and the reviews that have been prepared but not released by the present government. That labour will have another Mayor and GM forum to discuss changes required.

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Warren on Thursday 28th February 2019

ITEM 3 WESTERN DIVISION COUNCILS OF NSW 2019 ANNUAL CONFERENCE CONTINUED

- Road funding issues - Labour will review the general purpose and roads part of FAGS grants and review the current formulas to support rural councils of low populations but longer road lengths than city councils. Labour will reassess the regional and local roads network and will adopt the NRMA recommendations and will increase roads funding by an additional \$900million and will not require councils co-contributions. Labour will maintain the existing rural roads program.
- Additional funding will be provided to Landcare and land management agencies to improve water ways and fight weeds and other plant species.
- Labour will remove payroll tax for small businesses in the western areas.
- Labour will assist in Main Street revitalisation grant fund to assist councils to improve business areas.
- Labour will double library per capita funding. A new library infrastructure fund will also be provided.
- \$200million will be provide to a Cultural Fund for Regional NSW including the arts areas.
- Webcasting Council meetings - Labour will look at the provisions in the code and ability to deliver this. Labour will provide up to \$40,000 to allow installation of equipment and make amendments where internet access is not available.
- What is the plan for councils who do not join a Joint Regional Organisation? - Labour supports joining voluntarily, and the concept is supported.
- Indexing of Government Grants to ensure they keep pace with costs of living e.g. library funding - the level of service falls due to the lack of indexing.

Jock Laurie - NSW Drought Co-ordinator

Presented the following items;

- Drought has been in evidence for the western areas for 5-6 years.
- Issues have emerged around charities acting in the drought areas in competition to local businesses e.g. fodder purchase.
- Tensions are being seen in communities due to personal, emotional and community stress.
- Challenges are occurring between differing agricultural communities who operate differing agricultural types e.g. grazing, irrigation etc.
- Requests are being called for agricultural packages to support farmers e.g. EC, but governments and farmers need to review how they manage their own resources and how the current packages available can continue to work. Many people survived without EC funding as it was not applied equally.
- It was indicated that a need to view all members of a rural community including small business, teachers etc to ensure communities remain viable.
- He gave an over view of current drought packages including - drought assistance fund, the farm innovation fund, transport subsidises for stock and fodder, and farm business development fund.

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Warren on Thursday 28th February 2019

ITEM 3 WESTERN DIVISION COUNCILS OF NSW 2019 ANNUAL CONFERENCE CONTINUED

- Other allowances where identified from household support, tax incentives, low interest loans drought communities programs, etc.

James McTavish - Town Water Security Commissioner

James spoke on the following items;

- A review has been undertaken of the current issues around drought impacts on town water supplies and the development of a response for government to plan and meet community needs.
- It was indicated that government does not have a bottomless bucket of money to meet drought needs.
- Councils and government need to plan for future droughts as they do for fires and floods.
- That Councils need to plan for a worse case scenario and that communities reach a critical water shortage that is prolonged. The planning needs to include the community and that governments agencies and water authorities are talking the same issues, that each agency supports the advice being provided and what the outcomes are.
- Communities need to transition out of drought and prepare communities and business support.
- That future policies need to be developed to support communities e.g. emergency access to bores, in stream water, water releases, etc without a need to seek normal approvals.
- General comments from the floor asked about water reuse, transfer of water from the north and impacts of irrigation.
- Funding is available for water treatment plants on a confounding arrangement and can full funding be undertaken. \$500 million now available through the Safe and Secure Water Grants Program. Small councils cannot invest in water upgrades as they cannot cofounder the costs and councils do not have a rate base to support loans or payback.
- Discussion was held on increasing storage capacity of existing storages and increasing storages to drought proof water supplies in the long term. Greater infrastructure development needs to be considered along rivers as to wires or other regulators.

Tim Hurst - CEO, Office Local Government

Mr Hurst gave an overview of changes to the Local Government Act, the code of conduct and the code of meeting practice;

- Changes coming to require Internal audit process.
- IP&R has been strengthened to require councils to use this program to develop its priorities with the community.
- Engagement Managers have been put in place to work with councils and help councils to understand and support changes to Local Government.

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ITEM 3 WESTERN DIVISION COUNCILS OF NSW 2019 ANNUAL CONFERENCE CONTINUED

- The Government has rolled out training programs to allow councils to train staff to meet the future needs.
- OLG are working within the Bio Diversity Legislation, are implementing crown land changes to move crown land to councils and has provided some funding.
- Local Government Grants Commission is reviewing grants to Local Government.
- Continued funding of JO's - Jo's need to be successful and prove this so that Government can provide further support (Deputy Premier comment).

Gary Barnes - Deputy Secretary, Department Premier and Cabinet

Mr Barnes spoke on the following;

- Regional Development Plan - that the Government provides a level of service and facilities that are the best they can be. That Government will provide good infrastructure and good services, support people to grow the local economies - improve roads, services and facilities across all communities.
- Regional Growth Fund and grant opportunities - Councils have received funding from Stronger Country Communities, the next round will allow for funding of youth. Growing Local Economies grants have been available to councils and future rounds will not have BCR requirements for rural areas.
- JO's will get a letter to allow JO's to make decisions at a local level. JO's will make grant applications and allocate funding deeds at a regional level.
- Government shall put \$500million into bridge program. Government will take back some bridges and roads to ensure they are upgraded.
- Discussed a need for State Government to work closer with councils to identify local issues to see what is needed at that council rather than work at State level.

Geoff McKechnie - Assistant Police Commissioner

Mr McKechnie advised on the following;

- NSW Police Force has been redesigned and the western region makes up 70% of NSW with seven (7) police districts. More decisions are being made at a local and regional level.
- Changes are being made to look at vulnerable persons (aged/disabled) and management of these people.
- NSW Police will build a \$35million Police training facility in Dubbo.
- Police wish to recruit more police from regional NSW and require an additional 2000 people over next couple of years.
- Fraud (internet) and sexual assaults are increasing and a need to protect identification to prevent fraud issues. Generally crime is statistically good.
- Emergency Committees are reporting water issues through the Council Committees and a need to monitor supplies.
- Rise Up Program - is supported by the Police and may be of value to local youth.

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Warren on Thursday 28th February 2019

ITEM 3 WESTERN DIVISION COUNCILS OF NSW 2019 ANNUAL CONFERENCE CONTINUED

- Request that all communities report all crime to the Police and issues of concern so that the Police can capture statistics to allow greater police resources to be allocated.

Hon Niall Blair MLC, Minister for Regional Water

The Minister addressed the following;

- The government has brought forward their Western Regional Water Strategy to be able to look at what needs to change in the system.
- The Government is looking at a Western Weir Strategy to examine the infrastructure to look at new weirs upgraded weirs or how to take these back from councils to reduce the burden of maintenance.
- The Government has provided additional staff at Dubbo to assist councils in assessing applications and approvals of works e.g. waters, sewer treatment works etc. under the Safe and Secure Water Programs.
- Emergency Water Assistance Funding has been increased by \$5million to assist emergency works.
- Water compliance is now regulated by a separate agency of government and changes have been made to metering standards.
- The Minister indicated that water security applications need to be submitted to upgrade water systems and services.

Questions of Minister

- *The \$4.2billion coming to NSW can we drought proof NSW* - A commitment has been made to raise Wyangala Dam, to have \$25million to investigate similar schemes as the Bradford Scheme (1920's) to bring water from the north, water projects will be reviewed based on requests from councils and regions.
- *LGNSW President Linda Scott asked about water utilities and privatisation* - the Minister confirmed that the Government will not privatise water utilities of councils. Councils can work under the JO model to make applications and efficiency the government will support these processes of working to get across the line for funding.
- *Brewarrina Mayor raised an issue of environmental water being sent down the Macquarie River and from other source for town use and stated that environmental water is used for irrigation along the Macquarie.* The Minister asked for factual statements and evidence as irrigation was carryover water not environmental and that accuracy in conversations need to occur. There will be water transfers to occur and the Minister will use legislative tools to protect the water to towns. Water releases to systems will be around April to reduce transmission losses.
- *A question was asked about advice from the water experts and does the Minister accept that?* The Minister advised that his decisions is based on expert advice as he has to sign all the documents. He believes that he has to trust the advice and he asks as many questions as possible before he agrees to sign the documents to make decisions happen.

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Delegates Report by the Mayor
to the Ordinary Meeting of Council held in the Council Chambers,
Warren on Thursday 28th February 2019

ITEM 3 WESTERN DIVISION COUNCILS OF NSW 2019 ANNUAL CONFERENCE CONTINUED

- *Water buy back issues and impacts on the community and future increases in increased environmental water is causing damage, can we return to translucent flows?* The Minister advised that he is not the Minister for Environmental Water, but advised that translucent flows also have issues but agreed that a review of flows should be undertaken.

Russell James, Executive Director MDBA

Gave an update on the roles and functions of the MDBA Board and the development of the basin plan.

An overview of each basin area was provided with a detailed review of the release of water from Menindee Lakes under the water sharing agreement in 2016/17 that resulted in fish deaths. It was also advised that the MDBA has access to water once the lakes reach a certain level established back in the 1960's between the Federal and State Governments. Once the lakes are drawn down to the agreed level then the NSW Government is responsible for the remaining water to manage. The lakes have been subjected to blue green algae, temperature and reduced oxygen levels.

It was indicated that upstream extractions of water from the Barwon Darling System have increased since the MDB Plan was developed and this has impacted on the Menindee Lakes system and the reduced inflows.

The MDBA has made a response to the Royal Commission from South Australia which is available on the MDBA website.

Ms Margaret Crawford, Auditor General for NSW

Ms Crawford advised on the following audit needs for local govt;

- That good external audits are important to good governance.
- Identified that the audit process must be representative of the councils being assessed.
- Important that there is one (1) Auditor for all councils, that it allows better benchmarking, allows a review of greatest risks, to look at improved standards and develop best practice guidelines.
- Performance Audits - are used to benefit efficiency, effectiveness, economy and compliance. Three (3) performance audits have been undertaken and available on the website.
- Future reviews will include processes to detect fraud, review shared services and areas such as waste management, amalgamations success and development assessment processes, controls in the IT system, credit cards and water management. An audit on asset management will be undertaken.

WARREN SHIRE COUNCIL
Report of the Divisional Manager Engineering Services
to the Ordinary Meeting of Council to be held at
Council Chambers, Warren, on Thursday 28th February 2019

ITEM 2 RIVER WATER PUMP STATION OXLEY PARK

(W1-1)

RECOMMENDATION

That Council accept the recommendation as made in this and the attached report.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to advise Council of the status of repair and reinstatement into service of the river water pumps in Oxley Park.

BACKGROUND

The river water pumps at Oxley Park have been out of service for approximately 17 months. A diesel skid pump has been on hire since that time to provide river water to the Oxley Park Reservoir for irrigation and fire fighting purposes. In November 2018 Barnsons Engineering consultants were engaged by Council to engineer a solution and to have the two (2) submersible river water pumps reinstated back into service. Barnsons went to market via the tendering process to engage Darling Irrigation for this reinstatement works.

REPORT

As stated in the background above, Barnsons engaged Darling Irrigation to engineer a solution to the reinstatement of the river water pumps in Oxley Park. After two (2) visits to site by Darling Irrigation, it was correctly explained by Council Engineering staff that the Scope of Work that they had been given by Barnsons was not accurate and incomplete. Barnsons were then requested to be the main contact point between their contractor Darling Irrigation and Council so that Council was not approached directly by Darling Irrigation. Barnsons were requested to expedite the report on Darling Irrigation's recommended solution and Scope of Works including costings to complete this project. The report from Barnsons was received on Tuesday the 26th of February, which included the revised costings. The initial costs associated with the incorrect Scope of Works was approximately \$54,000, whereas the revised costings associated with the correct Scope of Works is approximately \$106,000. As this is twice the former costing, Engineering staff have recommended that Council go to the local marketplace as well as the expanded marketplace for some comparison costings around this most recent Scope of Works. This process will be via the Tenderlink System as a Request for Quotation (RFQ). This will give Council some extra confidence in the costings received from the initial subcontractor.

It is estimated that this process would take approximately 28 days to receive any and all responses.

FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The current budget allocated for these works is insufficient for the revised Scope of Works. The Diesel Skid mounted Pump will have to remain on hire for a further period to maintain Reservoir levels.

WARREN SHIRE COUNCIL
Report of the Divisional Manager Engineering Services
to the Ordinary Meeting of Council to be held at
Council Chambers, Warren, on Thursday 28th February 2019

ITEM 2 RIVER WATER PUMP STATION OXLEY PARK

CONTINUED

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Council may not be able to maintain fire fighting services to the community, placing a significant legal risk to Council.

RISK IMPLICATIONS

Funds may not be adequate for the permanent reinstatement of the river water pumps. River water may not be available for emergency services such as firefighting purposes.

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

Nil

OPTIONS

Nil

CONCLUSION

River water supply must be maintained for fire fighting purposes and further quote for costs for the reinstatement of the river water pumps should be canvassed in the local and broader marketplace.

LINK TO POLICY AND / OR COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

A Safe and Clean Community;

1.4.3 Provide adequate protection from fires, other natural disasters and other risks to health and safety.

Management of the local environment;

Need for ongoing management of water supply.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Barnsons Report on Darling Irrigation Scope of Works and Costs.

ATTACHMENTS

As above.

WARREN SHIRE COUNCIL
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to the Ordinary Meeting of Council to be held at
Council Chambers, Warren, on Thursday 28th February, 2019

ITEM 3 LOW RIVER FLOW IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL (W1-6.1)

RECOMMENDATION

That Council note the concern that river water may not be available to Council or residents later into 2019.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to advise Council of the lack of river water availability if significant rainfall is not experienced across the Burrendong Dam catchment within the next three (3) months.

BACKGROUND

Water NSW conducted a series of workshops / presentations during January 2019 in several regional towns including Warren, along the Macquarie River. These presentations were conducted for affected water users including irrigators, farmers, interested community groups and a special workshop for Local Government was held in Dubbo on the 16th of January 2019. The Town Services Manager attended this presentation (copy emailed to Councillors). During this presentation it was explained that the inflows into the dam are one quarter of the minimal inflow recorded during all previous droughts back to 1902. As the dam was not constructed until 1967 this data was gained from computer modelling. The current level of supply in Burrendong is 8% of total storage capacity of 100%. Several towns upstream of Warren are introducing or have introduced water restrictions on residents to maintain supply for each town as follows;

Town	Water Restriction Level	
Wellington	Nil	To be commenced March 19
Geurie	Nil	To be commenced March 19
Dubbo	Nil	To be commenced March 19
Narromine	Level 3	Introduced February 19

REPORT

Warren township has a dual reticulation system where bore water is provided to each residential and commercial property for internal household use and river water is provided for outdoor use including irrigation of gardens and lawns. Council has several irrigation systems in place for parks, sporting fields, gardens, street trees and the cemetery. Most importantly the fire fighting hydrants are all supplied from the river water mains. If the supply level in Burrendong Dam drops to 4% or below, the river will not flow and river water will eventually drop significantly, therefore placing Warren's firefighting capability at risk. This risk has been identified mid last year by engineering staff and a program was started under the water valves project to install hydrants on the bore water reticulation system. Currently there have only been 10 hydrants cut into the Bore Water System. This matter was also discussed at the latest Local Emergency Management Committee meeting. The only alternative to maintain the river water available is to introduce water management strategies such as water restrictions, at a level that will reduce the demand on river water.

WARREN SHIRE COUNCIL
Report of the Divisional Manager Engineering Services
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Council Chambers, Warren, on Thursday 28th February, 2019

ITEM 3 LOW RIVER FLOW IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL CONTINUED

Council has previously adopted the Lower Macquarie Water Utilities Alliance (LMWUA) levels of water restrictions (Attachment 1). Although it has been several years since water restrictions were imposed in Warren, it is recommended that water restrictions be introduced in Warren township at Level 3. Level 3 restrictions are the “Odds and Evens” systems where the houses with odd numbers get to water for the hours of 6am to 9am and 6pm to 9pm on those days with odd dates, and alternatively even numbered houses get to water on those days with even dates between the same hours. There are several other restrictions such as no hand held hoses are to be used. Other examples of Level 3 Water Restrictions are;

Watering of lawns and gardens	Use of micro sprays, drip systems and soaker hoses limited to: 6am - 9am and 6pm - 9pm. Every second day in accordance with the odds and evens scheme. Hand held hoses not permitted
Washing down of paved/concrete surfaces	These surfaces are not to be washed down during water restrictions, except if a spill poses a health or safety hazard
Irrigation of New Turf	Permitted for one week after laying, after which Level 3 water restrictions on watering lawns apply.
Private Swimming Pools and Spas	Pools may be topped up with a hand held hose but only between 7am-9am and 6pm-8pm any day. All pools must have a cover that is being used.
First Fill of Private Swimming Pools	Only with Council permission and provided that a pool cover is used.
Car Washing	With a bucket only on lawn. Only permitted between 9am-12pm any day.
Washing of Clothes	Residents to be encouraged to wash only in full loads.
Shower/Baths	Permitted
Use of Evap Coolers	Permitted
Inflatable/Temporary Children’s Pools	Permitted

See Attachment 1.

FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The costs of hydrant installation on the bore water mains is funded by Council. Council will review grant funding opportunities through Emergency Services NSW to see if additional support is available to reduce risks.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Council may not be able to maintain firefighting services to the community, placing a significant legal risk to Council.

WARREN SHIRE COUNCIL
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ITEM 3 LOW RIVER FLOW IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL CONTINUED

RISK IMPLICATIONS

River water may not be available for emergency services such as firefighting purposes.

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

Nil

OPTIONS

Nil without significant rainfall over the dam catchment.

CONCLUSION

River water supply is decreasing significantly and water management measures will have to be implemented to maintain supply.

LINK TO POLICY AND / OR COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

A Safe and Clean Community;

1.4.3 Provide adequate protection from fires, other natural disasters and other risks to health and safety.

Management of the local environment;

Impacts of extreme weather

Impacts of water reform

Need for ongoing management of water supply.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Water NSW Presentation notes

ATTACHMENTS

LMWUA Water Restrictions