

14 Relevant policies

This section outlines the policies relevant to Yass Valley LGA. There are a number of policies and strategies prepared by or on behalf of the State Government that have relevance to this Study. It is important to note, however, that not all published policies and strategies represent State Government “policy” on a particular issue.

14.1 Land use

14.1.1 Rural Lands Policy

The Rural Lands Policy (Department of Urban Affairs and Planning) was released in November 2000.

Part 1 of the Policy establishes planning principles that must be considered when a draft LEP applying to rural land is prepared. It should be consistent with the Government’s Policy for Sustainable Agriculture in NSW (as outlined in Section 14.2). The matters to be considered are summarised below:

- Provide justification for provisions enabling rural dwellings outside of designated urban or rural residential areas;
- Ensure provisions do not unreasonably increase agricultural values;
- Ensure provisions do not impact upon the availability of water;
- Encourage the amalgamation of rural lots;
- Provide opportunities for a range of rural activities;
- Identify and investigate the cumulative impacts of the LEP on agriculture; and
- Remove provisions relating to concessional allotments.

Part 2 of the Policy focuses on strategic planning for new urban settlement and rural residential development. Draft LEP’s for settlement on rural lands must be based upon a Strategy agreed to by the Director-General of the Department of Planning.

14.1.2 Better Rural Residential Development

Better Rural Residential Development (Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, 2001a) is currently under review but was intended to be a practical guideline to help councils in inland NSW prepare successful strategies for rural residential development (that is, residential development in a country setting outside urban areas). The Better Rural Residential Development document is available at regional offices however it is important to note that it is currently under review.

In addition to outlining steps for preparing a rural residential strategy, the guideline contains regional principles for:

- LEPs dealing with rural settlement;
- Supply of rural residential development;
- Location of rural residential development;

- Lot sizes for rural residential development; and
- Subdivision design of rural residential development.

It should be noted, however, that one of the failings of this document was that it did not consider rural residential development within a strategic context. The principles contained in the document may be of use after a land use strategy has identified the 'need' or otherwise for additional rural residential development, however they do not provide the justification for the provision of additional rural residential development.

14.1.3 Planning for Bushfire Protection 2006

Planning for Bushfire Protection 2006 (PBP) came into force on 1 March 2007. This document replaces Planning for Bushfire Protection 2001.

All development on Bush Fire Prone Land must satisfy the aim and objectives of PBP. The aim of PBP is to use the NSW development assessment system to provide for the protection of human life (including firefighters) and to minimise impacts on property from the threat of bush fire, while having due regard to development potential, on-site amenity and protection of the environment.

More specifically, the objectives are to:

- Afford occupants of any building adequate protection from exposure to a bush fire;
- Provide for a defensible space to be located around buildings;
- Provide appropriate separation between a hazard and buildings which, in combination with other measures, prevent direct flame contact and material ignition;
- Ensure that safe operational access and egress for emergency service personnel and residents is available;
- Provide for ongoing management and maintenance of bush fire protection measures, including fuel loads in the asset protection zone (APZ); and
- Ensure that utility services are adequate to meet the needs of firefighters (and others assisting in bush fire fighting).

Key features of the revised PBP include the emphasis on a performance based approach to development through focusing on safer outcomes rather than simply meeting prescriptive requirements. This approach to planning allows for considerable flexibility and innovation that links the bush fire hazard for a site with the implementation of appropriate bush fire protection measures.

Types of appropriate measures include suitable defensible space; access considerations; vegetation management; on-site emergency management arrangements; water supply provisions and site assessment for building construction requirements using AS 3959-1999.

PBP also provides the necessary planning framework for developments in rural and urban areas close to land likely to be affected by bush fire.

PBP is also applicable to the subdivision of land for residential and rural-residential

purposes and those developments which are considered a special fire protection purpose. These include, developments under State Environmental Planning Policy Seniors Living, schools, hospitals, and tourism developments. PBP recognises that these developments may present their own individual peculiar difficulties at times of an emergency.

Finally, PBP expands the considerations for infill developments - a dwelling within an existing allotment - and for the first time establishes the bush fire planning objectives for industrial, commercial and warehousing types of development.

14.2 Agriculture

14.2.1 Policy on the Protection of Agricultural Land

The Policy on the Protection of Agricultural Land (NSW Agriculture, 2004) is the updated version of the Policy for Protection of Agriculture Land, 1993. This policy is directed at promoting sustainable agriculture and the conservation of natural resources to maintain their longer term productive potential for the community as a whole.

The Department of Primary Industry's (DPI) policy objective is to support the retention of agricultural land, particularly prime crop and pasture land, for commercial food and fibre production. However, it is recognised that some alienation of prime crop and pasture land is inevitable as a consequence of population growth and economic development. The policy states that conversion of such land should only take place where fully justified, in an appropriate planning context, including an assessment of alternative sites.

The Policy highlights that agriculture uses a variety of land classes and soil types and that there are agricultural pursuits which are independent of the physical character of the land. Such industries include hydroponics, protected horticulture and intensive livestock production. There are numerous distance restrictions placed on farmers and industry such as noise, dust, the use of pesticides and herbicides to avoid non-target and offsite impacts. It is recognised that residential encroachment onto land used for agricultural pursuits means that distance restrictions (buffer zones) cannot be met in these closely settled areas and are effectively sterilised for agricultural use.

The Policy goes on to highlight that for all agricultural enterprises, appropriate access to labour, markets, processing facilities and infrastructure is necessary. The planning system should provide certainty and security for agricultural enterprises and enable them to maintain efficiency by ensuring the integrity of the agricultural zone is upheld, therefore enabling an appropriate response to future market, policy, technology and environmental changes through protection of the agricultural land resource.

The Policy does not prescribe a uniform minimum subdivision policy to be applied on a State-wide basis, as this is acknowledged as being arbitrary and counterproductive to the protection of agricultural land. Rather, it encourages the development of environmental planning policies for LGAs or regions, taking into account:

- The agricultural productivity and suitability of the land in question; and
- The nature and requirements of agricultural industries in the area being

considered. Environmental planning policies should be structured to achieve:

- Promotion of the continued use of agricultural land, particularly prime crop and pasture land, for commercial agricultural purposes, where that form of land use is sustainable in the long term;
- Avoidance of land use conflicts by preventing incompatible development in or adjacent to agricultural land;
- Protection of water resources for commercial, recreational, environmental and agricultural uses;
- Deregulated development consent procedures for agricultural land subdivision and transfer, where continued agricultural use of the land is to occur;
- A diversity of rural living opportunities in appropriate locations to provide scope for development in rural areas; and
- A capacity to effectively cater for specialised agricultural developments.

14.2.2 Policy for Sustainable Agriculture in New South Wales

The Policy for Sustainable Agriculture in New South Wales (NSW Agriculture, 1998) forms part of the process of incorporating principles and objectives of ecologically sustainable development into the ethos of agricultural industries in the State. It also aims to facilitate a change in agricultural production in New South Wales towards ecologically and economically sustainable practices and farming systems.

Under the Policy, the goal for sustainable agriculture in New South Wales is:

Agricultural industries that contribute positively to the State's productivity and economy, protect the State's biological and physical resource base, and support the State's rural people and communities.

The major outcomes from the Policy that should be driven by local government planning are to:

- Ensure that there is an opportunity for the next generation of farmers to farm without complications from residential development. This intergenerational equity is highlighted by the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD);
- Facilitate the structural adjustment of agriculture industries and rural communities to enhance the sustainability of agriculture. This translates to appropriate provisions to allow farms to expand to gain economies of scale in times of declining terms of trade while taking into consideration the buffers required by residential land uses as a result of increasing environmental regulation regarding noise, dust, odour and chemical use. This can be achieved through ensuring a farmer's 'right to farm' is recognised by good planning and ensuring that the integrity of agricultural areas are preserved;
- Provide opportunities for agricultural processing facilities to be located in rural areas and to strengthen their associated supporting infrastructure; and
- Include the full range of agricultural industries in regional development strategies.
- The Policy identifies objectives and strategies for six key issues:

- Agricultural production;
- Land management
- Water use and quality;
- Nature conservation on farms;
- Rural communities; and
- Integrated management.

In relation to integrated management, which is of particular relevance to this project, the Policy acknowledges that mechanisms are needed to facilitate consultation and cooperative action between industry, government, local authorities and community groups to enable agriculture to operate in an ecologically sustainable manner while meeting economic and social goals.

The Policy states that adequate planning processes are needed to ensure that the land best suited to agriculture is retained, and that land use conflict issues between agriculture and other forms of development are managed.

The objective of the Policy for integrated management is:

Agricultural industries, communities and governments working together to achieve positive economic, environmental and social outcomes.

Specific strategies identified in relation to integrated management include:

- Ensure collaboration in the development, implementation and review of plans, policies and legislation relating to agriculture;
- Ensure the equitable and efficient allocation of land and other natural resources between agriculture and other sectors of the community;
- Ensure land use planning is undertaken, where appropriate, in association with agriculture to avoid conflict that may jeopardise agriculture's sustainability;
- Identify lands and farming methods best suited to specific agricultural industries and retain production options for those lands in the future; and
- Adopt appropriate planning mechanisms to avoid future conflict over land use (e.g. competing demands for land for agricultural, residential and recreational uses).

14.3 Water

14.3.1 NSW State Rivers and Estuaries Policy

The objective of the State Rivers and Estuaries policy is to manage the rivers and estuaries of NSW in ways which:

- Slow, halt or reverse the overall rate of degradation in their systems;
- Ensure the long-term sustainability of their essential biophysical functions; and
- Maintain the beneficial use of these resources.

These objectives will be achieved through application of the following management principles:

- Those uses of rivers and estuaries which are non-degrading should be encouraged;
- Non-sustainable resource uses which are not essential should be progressively phased out;
- Environmentally degrading processes and practices should be replaced with more efficient and less degrading alternatives;
- Environmentally degraded areas should be rehabilitated and their biophysical functions restored;
- Remnant areas of significant environmental values should be accorded special protection; and
- An ethos for the sustainable management of river and estuarine resources should be encouraged in all agencies and individuals who own, manage or use these resources, and its practical application enabled.

14.3.2 State Water Management Outcomes Plan

The Water Management Act 2000 provides for the establishment of the State Water Management Outcomes Plan (SWMOP) to set out the over-arching policy context, targets and strategic outcomes for the development, conservation, management and control of the State's water sources.

The SWMOP explicitly provides for the protection and enhancement of the environmental services provided by aquatic ecosystems, while delivering a stronger and clearer framework for the use of water to meet human needs, including more secure access licences. It details the Government's commitment to effectively manage the important linkages between environment, human health, prosperous communities and profitable industries.

This SWMOP provides clear direction for all water management in New South Wales including (but not limited to) the creation of management plans addressing:

- Water sharing,
- Water use,
- Drainage management,
- Floodplain management,
- Controlled activities and aquifer interference, and
- Environmental protection.

In particular, it seeks to ensure that the NSW Government's Interim (Water Quality and River Flow) Environmental Objectives for NSW waters are explicitly addressed in future water resource management and action.

14.3.3 NSW Wetlands Management Policy

NSW Wetlands Management Policy is a whole of NSW government management policy that guides sustainable use, best practice and rehabilitation of the State's wetlands.

The Policy is one of the component policies of the NSW State Rivers and Estuaries Policy.

The Policy aims to minimise any further loss or degradation of wetlands and where possible, restore degraded wetlands. To achieve its goal the Policy adopts nine principles for the sustainable management of wetlands:

- **Principle 1:** Water regimes needed to maintain or restore the physical, chemical and biological processes of wetlands will have formal recognition in water allocation and management plans;
- **Principle 2:** Land use and management practices that maintain or rehabilitate wetland habitats and processes will be encouraged;
- **Principle 3:** New developments will require allowance for suitable water distribution to and from wetlands;
- **Principle 4:** Water entering natural wetlands will be of sufficient quality so as not to degrade the wetlands;
- **Principle 5:** The construction of purpose-built wetlands on the site of viable natural ones will be discouraged;
- **Principle 6:** Natural wetlands should not be destroyed, but when social or economic imperatives require it, the rehabilitation or construction of a wetland should be required;
- **Principle 7:** Degraded wetlands and their habitats and processes will be actively rehabilitated as far as is practical;
- **Principle 8:** Wetlands of regional or national significance will be conserved; and
- **Principle 9:** The adoption of a stewardship ethos and co-operative action between land and water owners and managers, government authorities, non-government agencies and the general community is necessary for effective wetland management.

14.3.4 The NSW State Groundwater Policy Framework Document

The purpose of the Groundwater Framework Policy document is to provide a clear NSW government policy direction on the ecologically sustainable management of the State's groundwater resources for the people of NSW.

The focus of the Policy is on water below the ground surface in a geological structure or formation, and on the ecosystems from which these waters are recharged or into which they discharge.

It provides for the better consideration of all issues which affect, or are likely to affect the condition and functioning of the resources of these areas including water chemistry, geology, aquifer recharge and discharge, and dependent ecosystems such as wetlands, lakes and streams, springs and seeps. It requires that careful consideration be given to all factors affecting the stability, vulnerability, and productivity of these systems.

The State Groundwater Policy is a framework policy designed to establish:

- Objectives and principles for groundwater management;
- A coordinated program for policy development, reporting and review;
- Tools for policy implementation; and
- Opportunities for information sharing.

The State Groundwater Policy is made up of the following component policies:

- Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems;
- Groundwater Quality Protection; and
- Groundwater Quantity Management.

14.3.5 NSW State Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems Policy

The *State Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems Policy* is specifically designed to protect our valuable ecosystems which rely on groundwater for survival so that, wherever possible, the ecological processes and biodiversity of these dependent ecosystems are maintained or restored, for the benefit of present and future generations.

The Policy provides guidance on how to protect and manage these valuable natural systems in a practical sense.

14.3.6 NSW Groundwater Quality Protection Policy

The Groundwater Quality Protection Policy is specifically designed to protect groundwater resources against pollution. Adoption of the Policy means that the sustainability of groundwater resources and their ecosystem support functions will be given explicit consideration in resource management decision making.

The Policy guides the decision-making of landholders and State and local government authorities in their management and use of groundwater.

14.3.7 Groundwater Macro Plans

There will be five groundwater plans that will be prepared to cover the remainder of the State not already covered by specific water sharing plans. Two of these macro plans will relate to groundwater sources within the YVC LGA. These are the

- NSW Fractured Rock Macro Plan; and
- NSW Inland Alluvium Macro Plan.

The macro plans will set an annual extraction limit for all groundwater use with each water source covered by the plan. The plans also set the priority of access for extraction from the groundwater source. The highest priority is given to the pumping of basic landholder rights, then town water supplies, specific purposes (eg mine dewatering) and finally all other purposes, which in the sub-region, are principally irrigation supplies.

The subdivision of land increases basic right access to the water source, which has the highest priority. In water sources that are fully or over committed, this growth in access to basic rights has implications on the availability of access to groundwater for lower priority

uses, particularly irrigation. This may result in reductions in irrigation entitlements to accommodate the increase in basic rights for lifestyle development.

NSW Fractured Rock Macro Plan

The major water source of the Fractured Rock Macro Plan in the Yass Valley LGA is the Lachlan Fold Belt.

This water source covers 27% of the State and as a water source has a significant volume of unassigned water. However, in some areas local restrictions do apply where there is significant entitlement (eg Mudgee) or basic landholder access placing stress on the resources locally (eg Yass).

- The Department of Water and Energy has indicated that the NSW Fractured Rock Macro plan is projected to be completed by 2010, and as a result extraction limits will not be set until that time.
- Whilst entitlement reductions will not be required in this water source with a corresponding increase in basic rights extractions because it is not fully committed, Council should be aware that the proliferation of bores in one locality will lead to interference impacts such as has been experienced in other areas of the State. The aquifers within this water source are not high yielding and are limited in their ability to disperse pumping impacts within the locality.
- Council is advised that covenants that prohibit the installation of individual domestic water supply bores are recommended. A community water supply bore may be a viable option to supply the subdivision. This would alleviate drawdown interference between individual's bores and also address a common problem in subdivisions of the proximity of septic disposal near supply bores.

NSW Inland Alluvium Macro Plan

There are 22 water sources covered by the inland alluvium Macro Plan and part of the Yass Valley LGA groundwater sources are affected by this Plan.

- The extraction limits for these groundwater sources has not been set, however entitlement levels are above the current sustainable yield estimates and therefore the Macro Plan may contain provisions to reduce the current entitlements levels. The Department of Water and Energy is in discussions with the Murray Darling Basin Commission on the issue of a "Groundwater Cap" for groundwater sources that are linked to surface water sources such as these. There has been no decision on this issue.
- Councils should be aware that entitlements may be reduced in these alluvial aquifers and this would impact on the irrigation industry in these areas. Councils should also be aware that any subdivisions in these areas and therefore increase basic landholder access would result in greater impact on the volume of groundwater available to the established irrigation industry.

14.3.8 Surface water macro plans

The Murrumbidgee Surface Water Macro Plan impacts the Yass Valley LGA and will affect available water for irrigation. This plan is due for completion in 2011.

14.3.9 NSW Weirs Policy

The State Weirs Policy establishes the goals and principles for the ongoing approval and management of weirs. The State Weirs Policy is a further component of the State Rivers and Estuaries Policy.

Weirs have served an important role in the amenity of the towns and properties they serve, but in recent years it has become apparent that this has been at a significant environmental cost.

The goal of the State Weirs Policy is to halt and, where possible, reduce and remediate the environmental impact of weirs.

The goal is to be supported by the adoption of the following management principles:

- The construction of new weirs, or enlargement of existing weirs, shall be discouraged;
- Weirs that are no longer providing significant benefits to the owner or user shall be removed, taking into consideration the environmental impact of removal;
- Where retained, owners shall be encouraged to undertake structural changes to weirs to reduce their environmental impact on the environment;
- Where retained, owners of weirs with regulatory works shall prepare and adhere to operational plans to reduce the environmental impact of those weirs;
- Where retained, gates, offtake structures and fishways on all weirs shall be maintained in good working order;
- Wetlands and riparian vegetation adjacent to weirs should be protected from permanent inundation;
- Areas of environmental degradation caused by the impacts of weirs upstream and downstream of weir pools, should where possible be rehabilitated; and
- A respect for the environmental impact of weirs should be encouraged in all agencies and individuals who own, manage or derive benefits from weirs.

14.3.10 NSW Water Conservation Strategy

The New South Wales Government is introducing measures that promote the efficient use of water and its conservation by all water users. Importantly, the strategy focuses on the government's view that we all have to work in partnership to achieve the sustainable management of water resources.

The Water Conservation Strategy takes a holistic approach to water use efficiency and conservation. The strategy builds on existing programs and projects, and addresses both urban and regional environments and the way in which it is used throughout New South Wales. The strategy aims to achieve a broader awareness and commitment to water conservation and a greater recognition of the scarcity and value of water in our society.

The Water Conservation Strategy contains 19 strategies and 55 actions which will promote significant improvements in water conservation in New South Wales. The

strategies range from research to education, from financial incentives to water-efficient appliances and include aspects of water management and use that require direction, support or initiation. Action needs to be taken by all groups involved in water use in New South Wales – local and State Government, industry organisations, householders, and professional organisations. Whilst it is envisaged that the State Government will provide leadership, the responsibility for water conservation rests with the whole community.

14.3.11 Farm Dams Policy

The Farm Dams Policy (Department of Primary Industries, 2004) gives landholders the right to capture and use for any purpose 10% of the average regional yearly rainfall runoff for their property. This is known as the “Harvestable Right” and for management purposes is implemented as a corresponding total dam capacity for any particular property. The policy has applied since January 1999.

The Harvestable Right is a basic right tied to the land. It is intended to satisfy essential farm needs such as for stock watering, house and gardens and may be used for any purpose, including irrigation. Note that the Maximum Harvestable Right is not a de facto method of determining minimum lot size for subdivision.

The Harvestable Right is not licensed and no fees apply. However, farm dams in excess of the Harvestable Right are required to be licensed.

There are some exemptions to the Farm Dams Policy, namely:

- Dams to control or prevent soil erosion and dams for flood, sediment and effluent detention and control;
- ‘Turkeys nest’ dams and ring tanks being storage within a natural catchment; and
- Dams for endorsed environmental purposes.

14.3.12 Policy & Guidelines - Aquatic Habitat Management and Fish Conservation 1999

The policy and guidelines for aquatic habitat management and fish conservation is an explicit recognition by the NSW Government that fish habitats are very important assets.

The 1998 Policy and Guidelines have now been updated to incorporate amendments to the Fisheries Management Act 1994, and their scope has been broadened and the format changed as a result of comments from the community.

The document has been prepared by NSW Fisheries in order to improve the conservation and management of aquatic habitats in NSW. It is targeted at local and state government authorities, proponents of developments and their advisors, and individuals or organisations concerned with the planning and management of our aquatic resources, including conservation organisations.

14.3.13 Floodplain Development Manual, 2005

On 6 May 2005, the Floodplain Development Manual 2005 was gazetted, as the manual relating to the development of flood liable land for the purposes of section 733 of the Local Government Act 1993.

Coupled with the State's floodplain management grant program, the Manual highlights the government's ongoing commitment to managing the risks resulting from natural hazards to reduce their impacts on the people of NSW.

It incorporates the NSW Flood Prone Land Policy, which aims to reduce the impact of flooding on individual owners and occupiers of flood prone property and to reduce private and public losses resulting from floods. The policy also recognises the benefits of use, occupation and development of flood prone land.

This State Government manual indicates that responsibility for management of flood risk remains with local government. The Manual assists councils to balance the conflicting objectives of the floodplain through a risk management process.

The New South Wales Government provides local government with technical, financial and policy assistance in floodplain risk management.

The 2005 Manual builds upon and replaces the 2001 Floodplain Management Manual. Key changes include outlining altered agency roles in floodplain risk management and clarifying the State Government's position on development standards.

14.4 Soils

14.4.1 National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality

The National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) is the first of its kind. It tackles two major natural resource management issues facing Australia's rural industries, regional communities and our unique environment.

Around Australia, 21 priority regions affected by salinity and water quality problems are targeted under the \$1.4 billion NAP. After the introduction of an Intergovernmental Agreement in December 2000, Bilateral Agreements between the Commonwealth and State or Territory Governments pave the way for the development of action plans in the priority regions. In this way, governments and communities work together in planning how to tackle salinity and water quality problems.

The program is driven by single regional plans, developed by local communities and supported by government and the best available science to improve the management of natural resources on a regional scale.

In addition, monitoring and evaluation processes, communications strategies, capacity building strategies and the development of market-based instruments and environment management systems will be aligned for the two programs.

14.4.2 NSW Salinity Strategy

In March 2000, the NSW Government hosted a Salinity Summit in Dubbo, bringing together land managers, scientists, conservationists and representatives of Aboriginal communities and all levels of government to discuss the problem of salinity and develop ways to tackle it together.

Taking on the Challenge: NSW Salinity Strategy is the NSW Government's response to the Summit's recommendations. It is designed to slow down the increase in salinity over a ten- year period from 2000, and to lay the foundations for salinity management beyond that.

The Strategy is an important cornerstone in the Government's long-term commitment to complex natural resource management issues under the NSW government's reforms in natural resource management. Communities will be making the decisions about how to balance the environmental, social and economic objectives in their own catchments.

To slow down the increase in salinity, the Strategy identifies the following actions:

- Protect and manage our native vegetation;
- Use our land so less water goes into the watertable;
- Use water more effectively and efficiently;
- Use engineering solutions;
- Make better use of land affected by salt; and
- Focus our efforts on priority salinity hazard landscapes.

The Salinity Strategy is designed to achieve these outcomes and thereby slow down the rate of increase in salinity. The Strategy has eight key tools to do this.

14.5 Catchment management

14.5.1 Catchment Management Authorities

Thirteen Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) have been established across the State by the New South Wales Government to ensure that regional communities have a significant say in how natural resources are managed in their catchments.

The CMAs are locally driven organisations with a board that reports directly to the NSW Minister for Natural Resources. These statutory bodies, established under the Catchment Management Authorities Act 2003 (CMA Act), coordinate Natural Resource Management (NRM) in each catchment. They are responsible for involving regional communities in management of the NRM issues facing their region, and are the primary means for the delivery of funding from the NSW and Commonwealth Governments to help land managers improve and restore the natural resources of the State.

The CMAs are responsible for managing natural resources at the catchment scale. Key roles include preparing Catchment Action Plans (CAPs) and managing incentive programs to implement the plans. The preparation of CAPs involves integrating previous work with the latest information and science and with local knowledge.

14.5.2 Murrumbidgee Catchment Action Plan

The NSW Government has required Catchment Management Authorities (CMA) to prepare catchment action plans covering the whole of the State. The Yass Valley LGA is located within the Murrumbidgee catchment.

The Murrumbidgee Catchment Action Plan provides a strategic framework for natural resource management in the Murrumbidgee Catchment and direction for future natural resource management investment.

The Murrumbidgee Catchment Action Plan has a 10-year life and builds on a long history of individuals and groups managing resource issues in a planned manner. Reviews of the Murrumbidgee Catchment Action Plan will occur at 5 and 10 years. The reviews will allow variations to the Murrumbidgee Catchment Action Plan to accommodate future planning developments and new knowledge.

The Catchment Action Plan is a statutory document to provide clear direction for future natural resource management through provision of incentives, education, planning and partnership development.

The Murrumbidgee Catchment Action Plan builds on the planning and activity already undertaken in the Murrumbidgee Catchment including the Murrumbidgee Catchment Blueprint (2003), Vegetation Management Plans and Water Sharing Plans.

The Murrumbidgee Catchment Action Plan's development has involved the community in the setting of targets and actions for natural resource management.

The catchment action plan objectives, targets and management actions for a range of issues:

- People and community;
- Salinity;
- Water;
- Soils and land use;
- Vegetation and biodiversity; and
- Cultural heritage.

Of relevance to this project, the Murrumbidgee catchment action plan identifies management actions requiring local government consents and approvals to be undertaken to ensure that impact on natural resources is minimised and, where appropriate, enhance natural resource outcomes. Specific actions in the plan include:

- Develop heads of consideration for LEPs that address biodiversity, native vegetation management, soil health, water quality, water quantity, fragile lands and salinity;
- Review current rural zoning and subdivision controls;
- Where appropriate, develop and implement new zoning and subdivision controls; and
- Incorporate locally refined model LEP heads of consideration into LEPs within the catchments.

14.5.3 Local Planning for Healthy Waterways

The Local Planning for Healthy Waterways booklet published by the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) outlines how incorporating water quality objectives into strategic planning of development is a key way that local councils – as well as state government agencies, developers and the community – can contribute to improving the health of waterways.

According to a major study of the community's attitudes to the environment (DEC 2004), water quality is the most important issue for the NSW community, with water conservation and management topping their list of major concerns.

Responsibility for ensuring healthy waterways and protecting water quality in catchments is shared between the community and all levels of government, from federal and state to catchment management authorities and local government.

Recognising the community's environmental values and uses for waterways, the NSW Government and the community have agreed upon Water Quality Objectives for each catchment.

Development can contribute to meeting these objectives by following siting and design principles and achieving reasonable levels of performance that protect our waterways. Local councils can contribute significantly by building the principles in this brochure into their local environmental plans, development control plans and assessment of development proposals.

Many councils and state agencies are already applying these planning principles to protect waterways and this booklet draws on their experience. By adopting these suggestions more widely in the strategic planning process, local councils can play a crucial role in supporting the community's values for our waterways. The booklet:

- Provides an outline of water quality management in NSW and answers some frequently asked questions about water quality in catchments; and
- Outlines a simple and practical six-step process for councils looking to establish a strategic planning approach for improving the health of waterways.

14.6 Vegetation management

14.6.1 NSW Biodiversity Strategy

The Strategic Goal of the NSW Biodiversity Strategy (National Parks and Wildlife Service, 1999) is to protect the native biological diversity of NSW and maintain ecological processes and systems.

The core objectives of the NSW Biodiversity Strategy are to:

- Ensure the survival and evolutionary development of species, populations and communities of plants, animals and micro-organisms native to NSW;
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- » Strengthen management of biodiversity on a bioregional basis while using existing catchment level networks to focus on specific actions, including

- the integration of biodiversity conservation and natural resource management, consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development;
- Identify, prevent or attack at-source the threats to biodiversity through timely implementation of targeted actions;
 - Build on the success of existing initiatives to develop a coordinated and cost-effective biodiversity conservation program involving the community, industry and all levels of government and ensure that the rights, knowledge and values of local and Aboriginal communities are properly recognised and reflected;
 - Strengthen actions to inform, motivate and achieve the support of the community including local and Aboriginal communities, industry, State Government agencies and Local Government, in conserving biodiversity; and
 - Increase our understanding of the ecological systems and processes required to conserve biodiversity through scientific research, survey and monitoring, taking into account the knowledge and values of Aboriginal and local communities.

The NSW Biodiversity Strategy identifies the following key principles for biodiversity conservation:

- Biodiversity is best conserved in situ (that is, in its natural environment) and at all levels:
- Collective responsibility is essential. Although all levels of government have clear responsibilities, biodiversity conservation will ultimately require the cooperation and support of the whole community, together with acknowledgment of the skills and knowledge of local and Aboriginal people.
- Protecting biodiversity requires management of threatening processes by identifying, preventing and mitigating the causes of biodiversity loss.
- Efficient, equitable and transparent processes for the allocation of resources and environmental planning and management are essential.
- Lack of full knowledge should not be used as an excuse for postponing action. In applying the precautionary principle, public and private decisions should be guided by careful evaluation to avoid, wherever possible, serious or irreversible damage to biodiversity through an assessment of the risk-weighted consequences of various options.
- Better knowledge of biodiversity will provide an improved basis for environmental planning and biodiversity conservation.
- Central to biodiversity conservation is the establishment of a comprehensive, adequate and representative reserve system in conjunction with actions to conserve biodiversity across the entire landscape.
- Commitment to intra and inter-generational equity requires the conservation of biodiversity for current and future generations.
- The close, traditional association of Aboriginal people with components of biodiversity is recognised, as is the desirability of equitably sharing benefits from the innovative use of traditional knowledge of biodiversity.

The strategy addresses 5 key issues and identifies relevant actions for each key issue. The

Strategy recognises that these actions will require varying degrees of support from all spheres of Government, and regional organisations. The issues are as follows:

- Awareness, training and education;
- Local Government resourcing;
- Regional partnerships and planning;
- Legislative frameworks; and
- Information and monitoring.

14.6.2 Biodiversity Planning Guide for Local Government

The Biodiversity Planning Guide for Local Government aims to assist councils to carry out biodiversity conservation as part of their day-to-day functions, especially those relating to planning and development. It provides councils with a 'good practice guide'.

The planning framework in NSW offers councils important opportunities to integrate biodiversity conservation with land use planning in a practical way. A feature of the Guide is its detailed treatment of the range of available planning tools. It provides illustrated examples of how biodiversity issues can be addressed by existing and future planning instruments, as well as by other council documents and processes.

The Guide highlights the importance of plan making for biodiversity conservation, as well as the need to integrate both regulatory and positive approaches. It shows how councils can conserve biodiversity through their existing regulatory and operational functions. The Guide does not create new plan making processes, but presents a package of strategies and tools that can be applied within existing frameworks.

14.7 State and regional strategies and studies

14.7.1 Sydney-Canberra Corridor Regional Strategy 2006 - 31

The Sydney–Canberra Corridor Regional Strategy (Department of Planning, 2008) applies to the local government areas of Wingecarribee, Goulburn Mulwaree, Upper Lachlan, Yass Valley, Palerang and Queanbeyan. It represents an update to the 1995 strategy.

The primary purpose of the Strategy is to accommodate and manage growth while ensuring that the rural landscapes and environmental settings that define the Region's character are not compromised.

Past clearing practices together with the underlying geology has resulted in a highly saline landscape in the Yass River valley. This has implications for the ongoing primary production of the area, as well as the quality of its drinking water supplies.

The potential for new agricultural industries in the Region confirms the importance of protecting rural lands as a long-term economic resource for the Region.

With its highly attractive rural character, rural lifestyle living as rural residential development has occurred at a significant scale in many parts of the Region. Rural residential

development can cater for demand for an alternative form of housing within the Region

provided it is appropriately located and planned for. The trend has been to locate rural residential development largely within the commuting zone of Sydney, Canberra and Goulburn and specifically adjacent to established centres such as Yass and Murrumbateman. However, if not appropriately located, such development has the potential to adversely impact on agriculture and other primary industries.

Outside the existing urban areas, rural lifestyle has been a significant driver of the demand for housing. In the southern part of the Region, rural residential development is clustered around Murrumbateman, Yass and Wamboin in Palerang Shire.

The key features of the draft Strategy relating to the non-urban areas of Yass Valley LGA are summarised below.

Housing

- The Strategy recognises the area of Gooromon Jeir as a longer-term urban development option.
- While subject to the NSW-ACT Cross Border Settlement Strategy, the key determinant of growth in Yass will be access to local water resources.
- Through local planning measures, the future housing mix will be better matched to the needs of smaller households and aged residents.

Transport and Infrastructure

- Regional infrastructure requirements listed in the State Infrastructure Strategy are included in the Sydney-Canberra Corridor Regional Strategy, to align growth and infrastructure.

Water

- The Regional Strategy gives effect to agreements between the ACT and NSW Governments regarding the supply of water within the southern subregion.
- New residential development in Yass Valley is contingent on a secure water supply. As such, local environmental plans for Yass Valley are to be consistent with the Cross Border Settlement Strategy to be prepared under the terms of these agreements.
- The Regional Strategy recognises the ability of Yass to supply its own water to enable growth.

Employment

- The Strategy targets 2,500 new jobs in the Yass Valley LGA over the next 25 years. Increases are expected in the areas of logistics, warehousing and transport, manufacturing, and health and aged care.

Environment and Resources

- The rural landscapes of the Yass Valley LGA are a key resource for a range of economic contributors to the Region. Traditionally the rural landscapes have been, and continue to be, predominantly made up of agriculture, though now also involve tourism, mineral resources, energy production through wind farms, and are increasingly becoming a lifestyle choice.
- Existing villages, such as Murrumbateman, Sutton, Gundaroo and Binalong play an important role in providing for housing choice, a rural lifestyle and often more affordable housing. The rural and built form character of many villages is a significant local and regional asset.

- By encouraging the majority of urban growth in existing major centres such as Yass, the strategy ensures the character of rural areas well away from urban centres is not lost to inappropriate development.
- Existing rural residential zones have the capacity to meet the demands for rural lifestyle housing within the Region. Additional development areas will only be considered if justified by a Local Settlement Strategy that assesses the net benefit of additional rural residential land against the loss of valuable agricultural lands.

14.7.2 ACT and Sub-Region Planning Strategy 1998

The ACT and Sub-Region Planning Strategy outlines objectives for, and approaches to, development both in specific localities and the whole of the ACT. Regional goals of the strategy include encouraging development that incorporates ecologically sustainable design principles and delivers desirable, appealing and environmentally responsible outcomes. As the overarching goal of the strategy, the core objectives of supporting ecologically sustainable development seek to improve the current state, and contribute to the longevity of the environment by enhancing individual and community wellbeing and welfare, providing for equity within and between generations and protecting the biological diversity and maintaining essential ecological processes and life-support systems.

Regional goals of the Strategy focus on delivering development outcomes that contribute positively to the functionality and appeal of the ACT, addressing the needs of the present and future communities, and fostering the economic, social, cultural; aesthetic and physical development and growth of the area.

The regional strategy identifies five key themes, the consideration of which is crucial to the successful development and growth of the area. These considerations and their main objectives are:

- **Natural resources**

Take a regionally consistent approach to surveying, protecting and managing regional natural resources in addition to energy sources and protect the biodiversity of the area, protecting threatened ecological communities wherever possible.

- **Rural land uses**

Promote the use of rural land for productive activity and activity that supports urban area, adopt a regionally coordinated approach to the management of rural land and adopt a best practice approach to minimise land use conflict and development that compromises the amenity and attractions of the land.

- **Settlement**

Provide a full range of lifestyle and housing choices and ensure that urban settlement is of a high level of amenity, protect the social sustainability of existing and future communities and continue to develop the metropolitan area as a series of towns separated by rural space and protect and enhance the qualities of the National Capital.

- **Infrastructure**

Provide infrastructure and services that match the desired settlement pattern, are cost effective and display high standards of design, lending themselves to further improvement with changing technology. Avoid infrastructure that will adversely affect the social, environmental, aesthetic and other qualities of the area, or contribute negatively to the spatial distribution and character of towns and villages.

- **Regional Coordination**

Encourage active participation in, and contribution to regional planning and development. Focus on addressing issues occurring on a regional scale with adjoining Councils and continue and improve inter-agency cross-border planning and development coordination.

14.7.3 Gooromon-Jeir Planning Study 1999

The planning study identifies key considerations and inherent factors of the Gooromon-Jeir area, affecting its future development. Factors discussed in the plan include topography and land, water and cultural heritage.

The study highlights important factors relating to the development and growth of the area, of which, little is known. Up-to-date information on land degradation and protected land for Taemas Bridge, as well as detailed information of the areas land uses, water quality and quantity, flora and fauna, heritage items and development pressures are important matters for consideration in the development of the area however suffer from a paucity of available information.

Capitalisation on the location of Gooromon-Jeir, within 25 km of both Yass and Canberra and managing the intensification of development in the area in such a way that preserves the Barton Highway view corridor are considered priorities for future land use management and planning strategies in the area.

Where the plan relates primarily to addressing existing natural issues in the Yass Valley region, the objectives of preserving biodiversity and reducing the amount of pressure exerted on the environment by existing and new development will certainly have implications in relation to future urban and rural development in the Yass Valley.