



# Murray Darling Association Inc.

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**Region 11 Meeting**  
**1:20pm, Thursday 13 November 2020**  
**Brewarrina Shire Council (Via Zoom)**

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## MINUTES – 13 November 2020

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### 1. ATTENDANCE

#### 1.1 Present

Cr John Campbell – Chair	Gunnedah Shire Council
Cr Jamie Chaffey	Gunnedah Shire Council
Cr John Coulton	Gwydir Shire Council
Cr David Coulton	Gwydir Shire Council
Cr Peter Petty	Tenterfield Shire Council
Annabelle Guest	Regional Engagement Officer, MDBA
Jane Humphries	Local Engagement Officer, Moree, Northern Basin, Commonwealth Environmental Water Office
Cr Greg Sauer #	Tenterfield Shire Council
Cr Doug Hawkins OAM	Liverpool Plains Shire Council
Emma Bradbury#	Chief Executive Office, Murray Darling Association

#### 2.2 Apologies

Cr Frances Young	Gwydir Shire Council
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**Action: That the apologies be accepted**

**Move P Petty/J Coulton**

**Carried**

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### 2. WELCOME – Meeting commenced at 11:08

Welcome and Acknowledgment of Country from Cr John Campbell

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### 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Nil

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#### 4. MINUTES

**Motion:** That the minutes of the Region 11 Ordinary Meeting held in August as typed and circulated, be confirmed as a true record of the proceedings of that meeting.

**Move G Sauer/ J Coulton      Carried**

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#### 5. REPORTS

##### 5.1 Chief Executive Officer

- As per online Report - [CEO Report](#)
- Earlier this month Basins Community Leadership program commenced across many regions. The CEO traveled to many of the regions. As a result, from now on for any engagement in communities take place, a report is written up and provided to the region outlining a summary of what was taken away, what action will be taking place and welcoming any feedback.
- For the last 3 days, the CEO has been in Canberra with the National President and signed off on the MDA and CSIRO Relationship Agreement. This is the first of its kind for the CSIRO. Also met with meeting with Mark Coulton and Deputy Prime Minister who were very strong supporters of a name change of the MDA to include “Local Government” in the name. An undertaking was developed to work with the Ministers when working through the process.
- Strategic Plan – Vision 2025 - Various Ministers and Departments are on board with the working document
- Meeting with BOM and as been tasked to do work that is aligned with the “**LEG Report**” and mapped out an Engagement Strategy
- Consultation process has been set up by the MDA and an office will be sent out inviting members to complete a survey and provide feedback.

##### 5.2 MDA Board Meeting

- As per previous [Minutes](#)

#### 6. GENERAL BUSINESS

##### 6.1 Boundary Revision

16 potential Councils that will be affected will be asked for submissions from member councils and non-member councils regarding the change of boundary. Feedback will be needed prior to the strategic workshop in January/February 2021 and then reported at the AGM and National Conference in August 2021.

The CEO reported that the members and Federal Ministers are strong supporters. Concern amongst other LGA's. It may result in individual members being unable to join and that only Organisations of Councils could hold memberships.

##### 6.2 Change of Name of Organisation

The Chair is looking to receive feedback from the Region Councils. He advised that at the Board Meeting, he will be voting as per the majority of the Region 11 Members wish to vote. The CEO advised the Board will not be voting on this, it will need to go to an Extraordinary General Meeting which may be held in March.

**6.3** Delegate Jamie Chaffey congratulated Councillor Campbell on his recent election to the very senior position of Vice President of the Murray Darling Association at the recent Ordinary Meeting of the Board held on 19 October. Cr Campbell is also currently serving as the Chair of Region 11 and supported him in his new role.

#### **6.4 National Conference**

Region 11 will be formally noting their Expression of Interest in hosting the 2022 National Conference

### **7. PRESENTATIONS**

#### **7.1 MDBA Update – Annabelle Guest**

##### **Current conditions**

- Continue to improve slowly across the region
- Gwydir – Copeton dam 16.6% HS allocation 100% and GS allocation 5% <https://www.mdba.gov.au/water-management/murray-darling-reports-data/water-in-storages>
- Namoi – Keepit 26.8% and Splitrock dam 4.9% Upper Namoi HS allocation 100% and GS allocation 50% drought stage 2, Lower Namoi HS 100% and GS 7% drought stage 3
- Border rivers - Glenlyon 14.4% Coolmunda Pindari 27%
- Winter crop Harvest about 60% complete, smooth run after early rainfall with good yields and protein levels reported. Some quality reduction in western and southern regions due to rain. Summer crop - cotton approx. 10 000 ha irrigated in the Gwydir, lower dryland ha's than average due to large winter crop planting. Upper and Lower Namoi approx. 8500 ha each Walgett 6800 ha and Bourke 10 000 ha. Sorghum and corn also have been planted

##### **MDBA**

- Sir Angus Houston appointed chair of the Authority. First listening tour to Riverina in October and will do a tour of SA before end of year. There is a planned tour for the Northern Basin early next year.
- BCC Call for Members now open.

##### **WRP**

- Assessment is continuing with Gwydir alluvium and surface water WRP's currently under assessment. Working in close consultation with NSW and NBAN.

##### **2020 Basin Plan Evaluation**

- Due for release prior to the end of the year, the major focus is expected to be progress and outcomes of the past 8 years and steering of the implementation of the Basin Plan to 2026.

##### **Climate change science**

- Work in conjunction with BOM and CSIRO due for public release. This work identifies climate change scenarios and their impacts on flows and connectivity.

### **ACCC interim report into Murray Darling Basin water markets**

- Water market is maturing and MDBA endorses ACCC's view that further reform is required with greater transparency and stronger governance.
- The 5 yearly review of the **Environmental Watering Plan** has been completed and found that the plan is working well providing clear direction and guidance how and where to use e-water for the long term benefit of the Basin.

### **Other**

- Gwydir Regional Water Strategy - managed through DPIE Public Exhibition closes today. 40 options on the table for comment.
- Namoi Regional water strategy public consultation is planned for early 2021

### **7.2 Jane Humphries – Local Engagement Office, Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment**

- See Attachment 1 – CEWO Presentation MDA Region 11 Councils

## **8. Notices of Motion/Questions with Notice**

### ***Notice of Motion***

#### **8.1 Vision 2025 (Strategic Plan)**

*That Region 11 recommends the Board consider the inclusion in Section 4.1.2 of Vision 2025 (Strategic Plan) – or have completed the “Executive Certificate for Elected Members” (NSW Councils) or the equivalent in other states.*

**Moved: J Campbell/ J Chaffey**

**Carried**

#### **8.2 Host of the 2022 National Conference**

*That Region 11 expresses interest in holding the 2022 National Conference.*

**Moved: J Coulton/ D Coulton**

**Carried**

## **9. NEXT MEETING**

To be advised

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## **10. CLOSE**

The meeting closed at 2.50pm



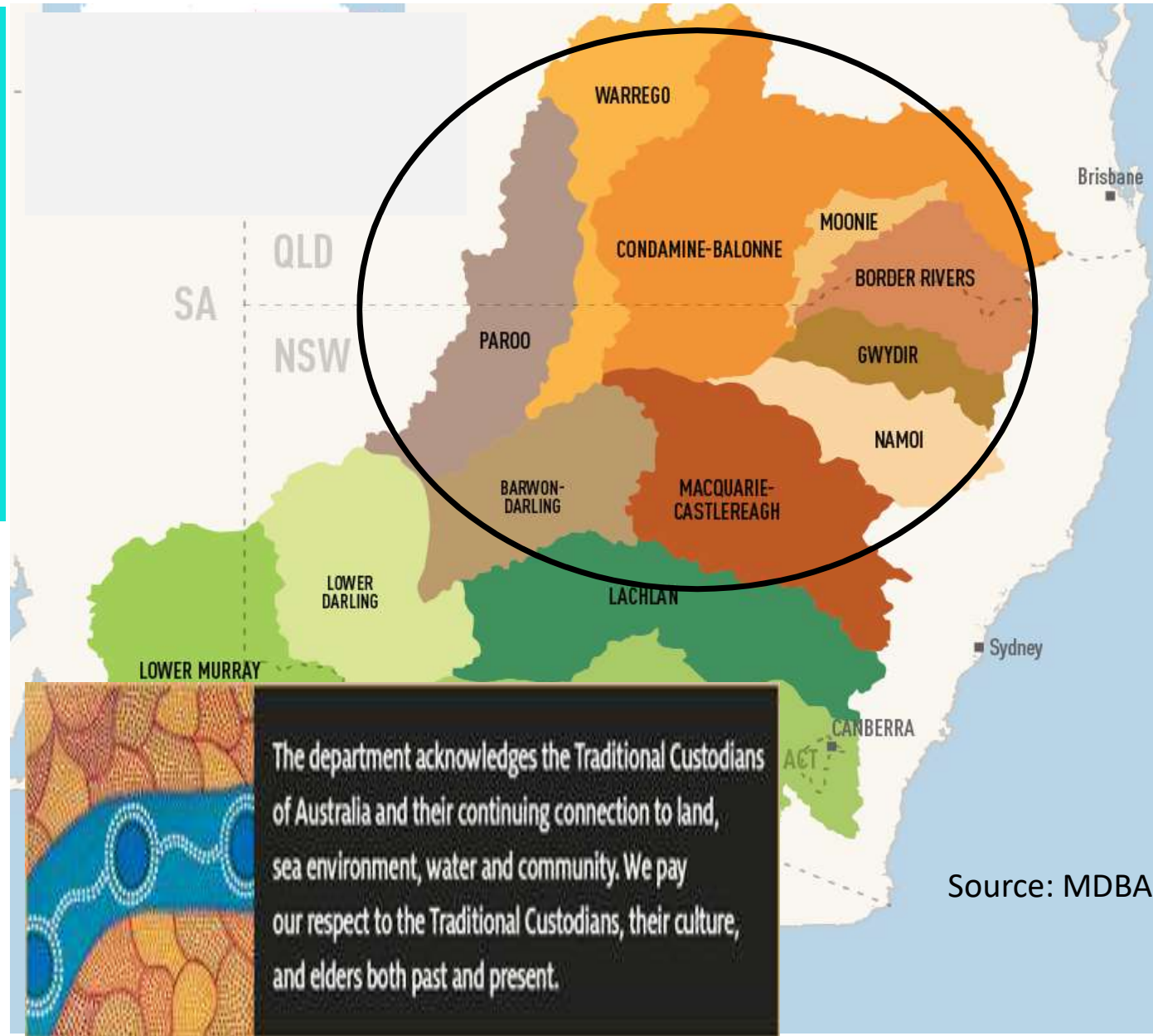
# Attachment 1

# Northern Murray-Darling Basin Environmental Water & Conditions Update

## – Presentation for MDA region 11

Jane Humphries, Local Engagement Officer, Northern Basin Section, 13 November 2020

Team: Lindsay White, Nerida Sloane, Hayley Behnke, Jane Humphries, Gavin Pryde, Brooke Sargent, Jason Wilson, Mike Peat, Liz Webb, Neal Foster



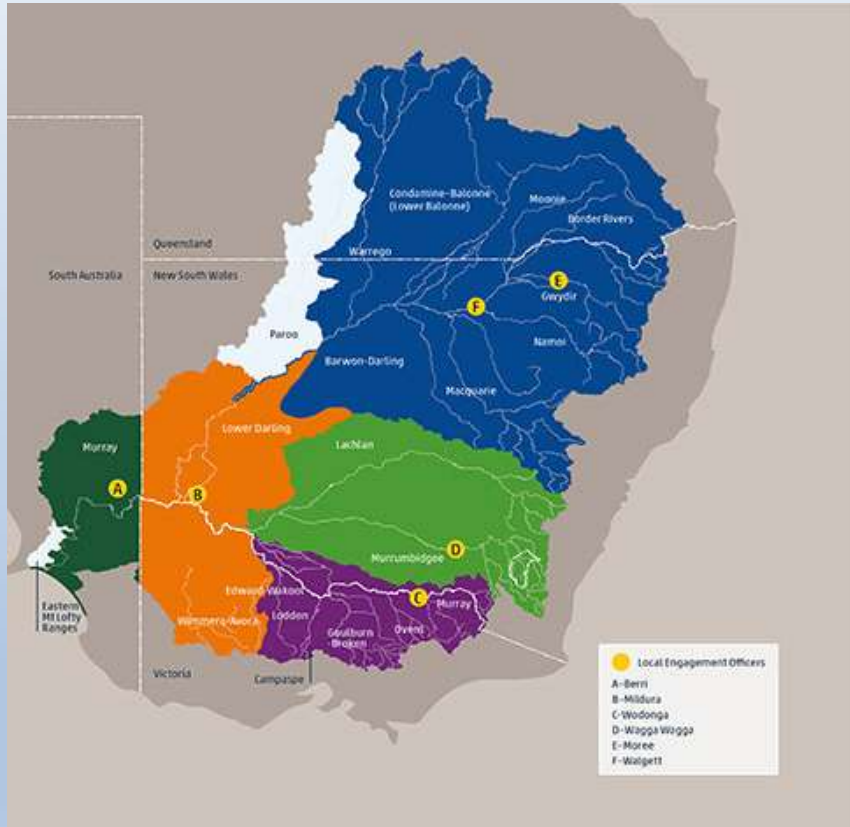
# Overview of presentation

1. CEWO Local Engagement Officers
2. Summary 2019-20 year
3. Summary in the Barwon-Darling 2019-2020
4. Plans for 2020-21
5. Current situation, current and likely actions
6. Engaging with communities
7. Engaging with MDA and Councils



# Links and based with communities

## 1. CEWO Local Engagement Officers



Berri:  
**Michelle  
Campbell**



Mildura:  
**Richard  
Mintern**



Wodonga:  
**Anthony  
Wilson**



Wagga:  
**Michele  
Groat**



Moree:  
**Jane  
Humphries**



Walgett:  
**Jason  
Wilson**

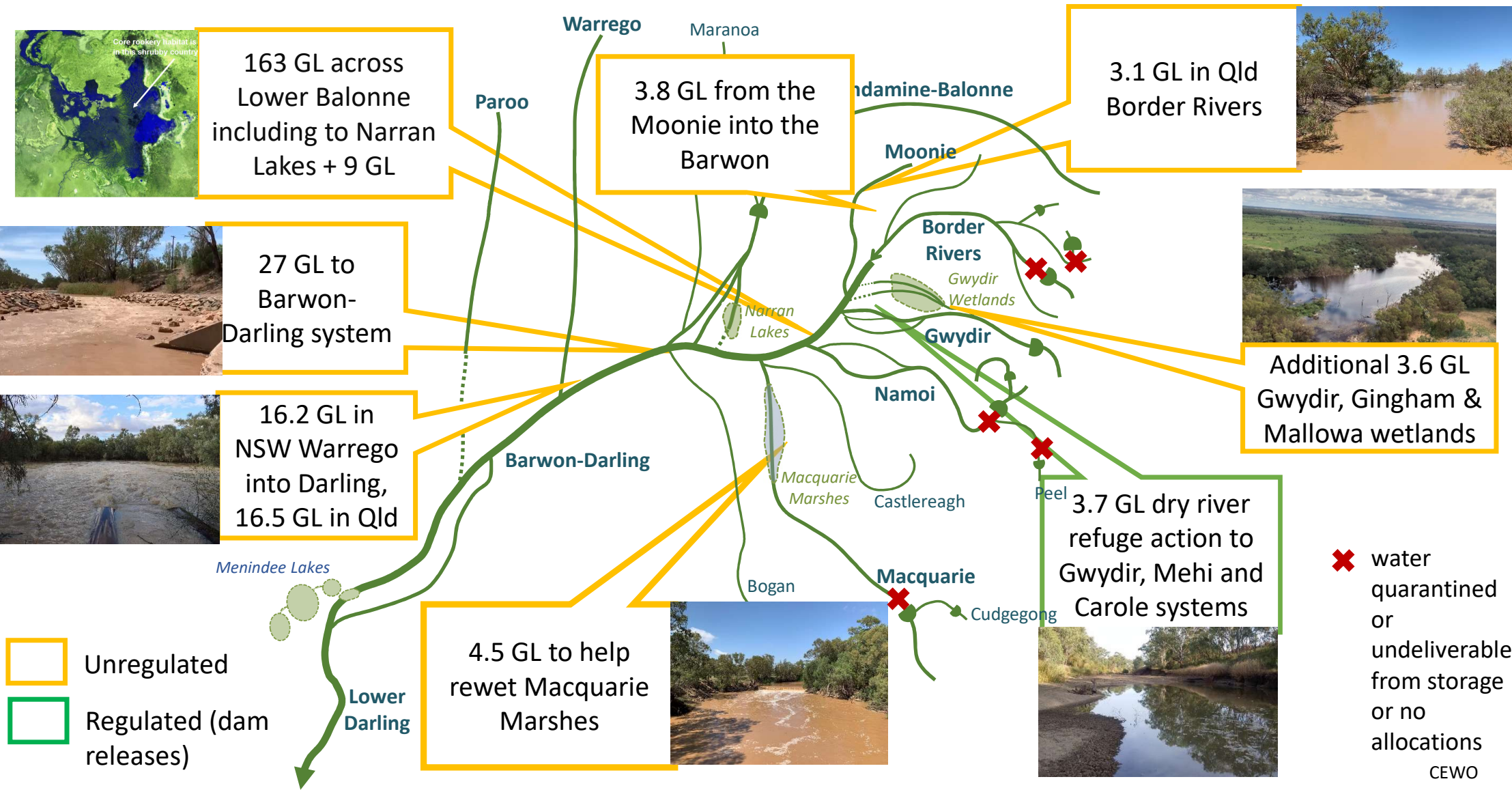


MDA conference in Toowoomba, NSW Country Mayors conference, planned mail out, emails, local catch ups, N-Basin tour.



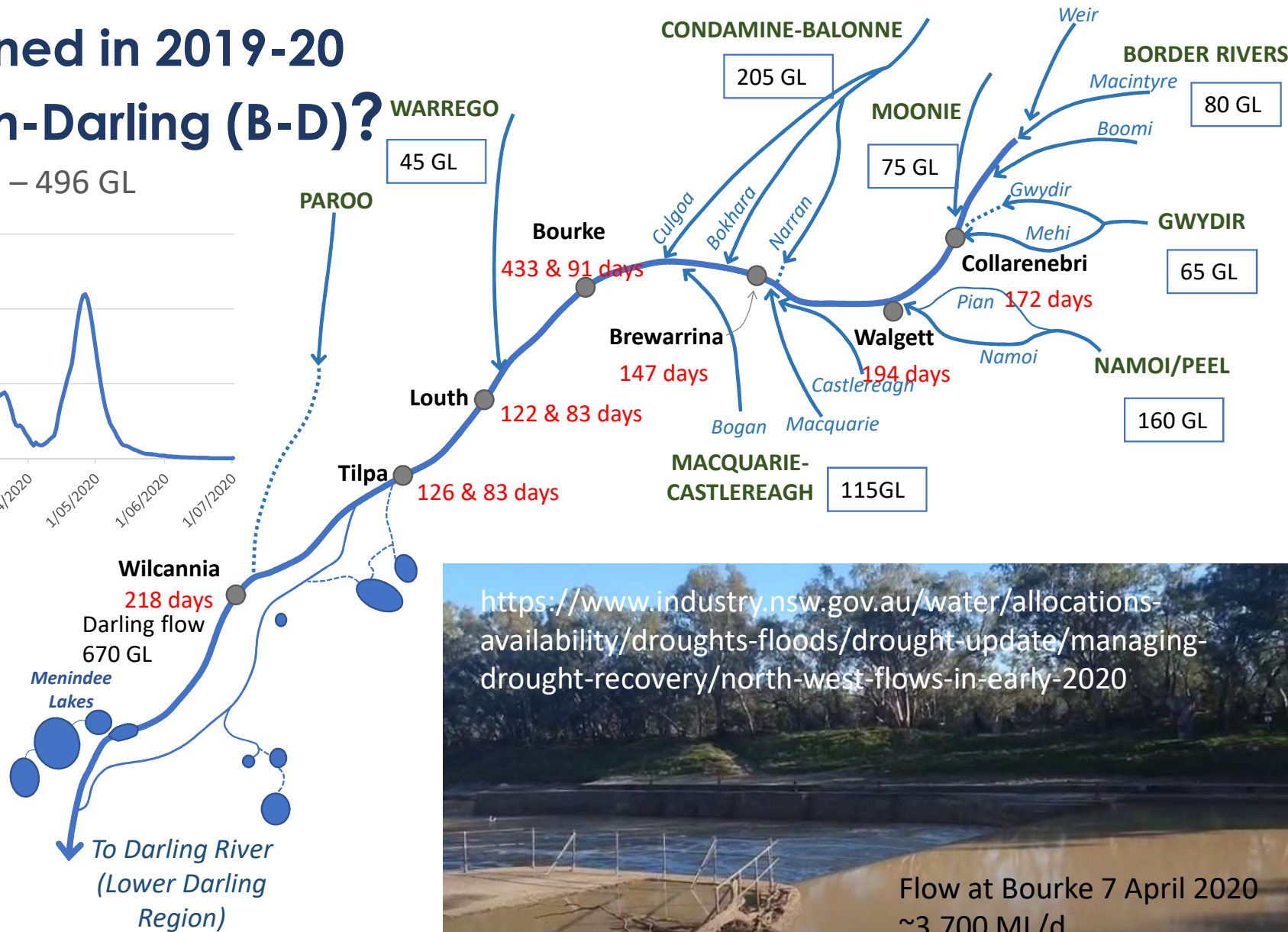
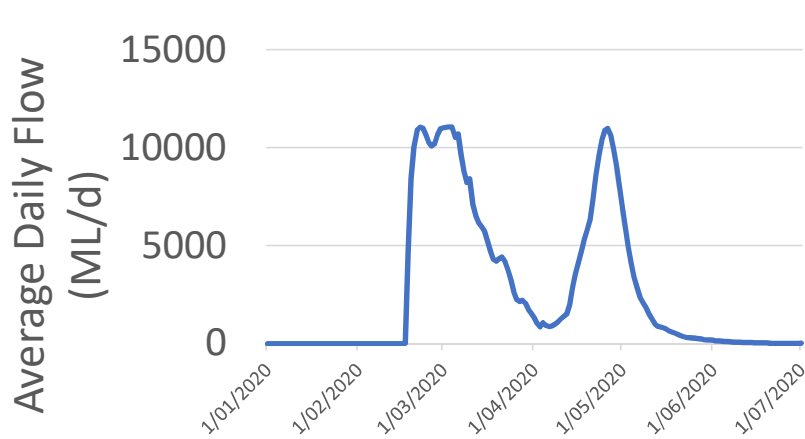


# 2. Summary of 2019-20 water year



### 3. What happened in 2019-20 in the Barwon-Darling (B-D)?

## Flow at Brewarrina – 496 GL



= Contribution of each tributary to B-D in GL

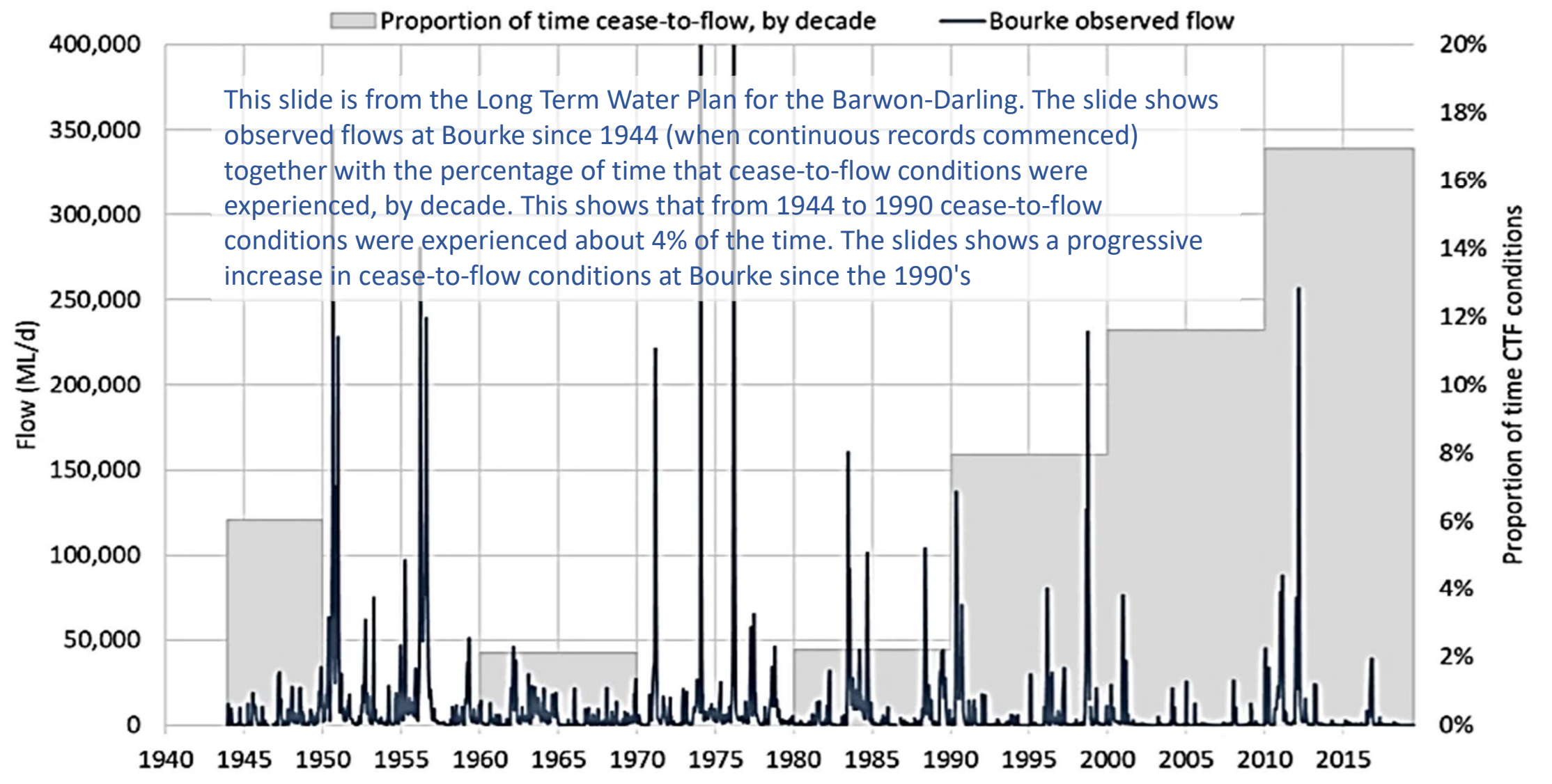
Numbers in red indicate cease to flow periods

Numbers in blue boxers are outflows from tributaries

<https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/droughts-floods/drought-update/managing-drought-recovery/north-west-flows-in-early-2020>

Flow at Bourke 7 April 2020  
~3,700 ML/d

# Long Term Flow Patterns at Bourke





# 4. Water Management Plan 2020-21

Available On website  
<https://www.environment.gov.au/water/cewo/publications/overview-water-mgt-planning-2020-21>

Or can mail/email out

Current CEWO events and updates on website  
<https://www.environment.gov.au/water/cewo/publications#event-updates>  
 Or can mail/email out

## Healthy Rivers, Healthy Communities

## Northern Murray-Darling Basin

What we aim to achieve with water for the environment in 2020-21

### Working with First Nations

The Commonwealth Environmental Water Office pays respect to the Traditional Owners and First Nations of the Murray-Darling Basin.

We acknowledge their enduring cultural, social, environmental, spiritual and economic connection to the rivers, wetlands and floodplains of the Basin.

We are committed to continuously improving how we work with First Nations across the Basin to manage water for the environment.



### Condamine-Balonne

Continue to support the recovery of the Narran Lakes Ramsar site following drought. Increase connection between habitats.



### Warrego River

Increase connection between the Warrego River and Darling River. Maintain health of the Warrego floodplain.



### Barwon-Darling River

Increase connection between habitats along the river. Protect refuges and native fish populations.



### Macquarie River Valley

Support recovery of Macquarie Marshes Ramsar site following drought and fire. Support native fish to breed and disperse.



### Border Rivers

Protect drought refuges for native fish. Increase connection between habitats.



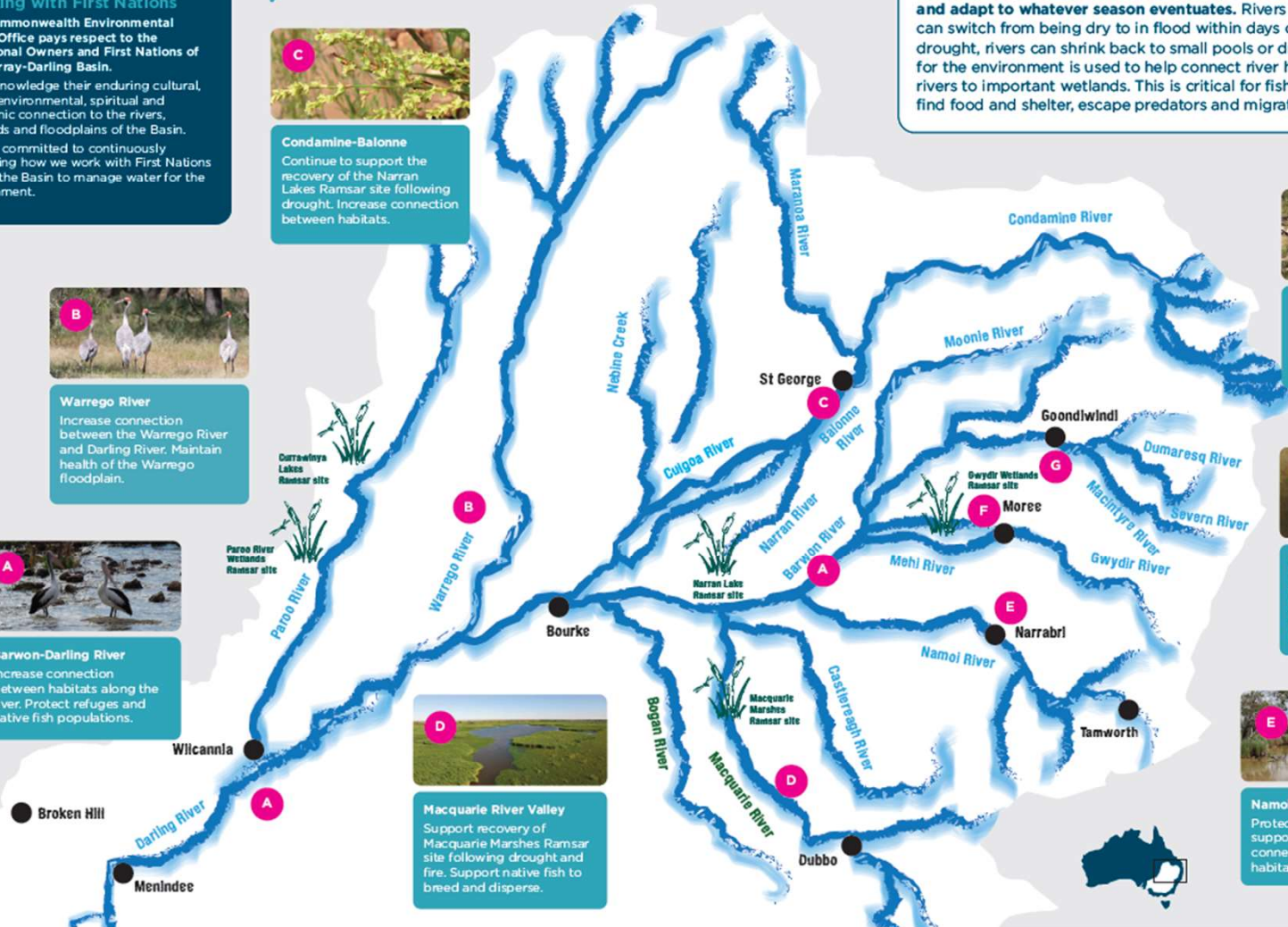
### Gwydir River Valley

Maintain drought refuges for native fish. Support Gwydir Wetlands (including Ramsar site) following drought and fire.



### Namoi River Valley







Protect drought refuges and support native fish. Increase connection between habitats.





## 5. Current situation: Environmental water in storages and likely actions

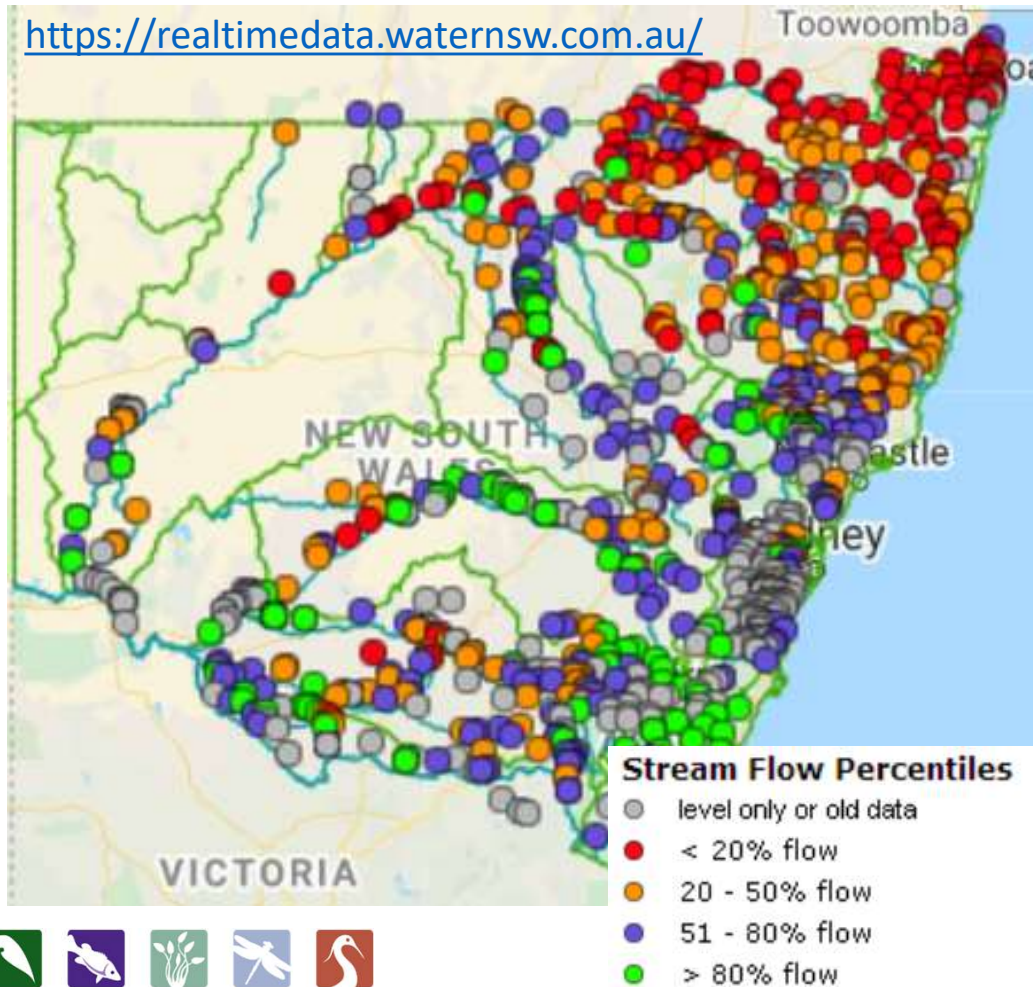
- As at 30 Sept 2020
  - If events, plus water against unregulated licences, rules and licences administered by states
  - Subject to change (adaptive management)
  - CEWO & NSW work collaboratively
- \*managed planned environmental water*

Valley 	Last regulated water deliveries <sup>#</sup>	CW Water available in dams	NSW Water available in dams	Current use plan (subject to change)
Macquarie	Oct – Nov 2020 April – June 2019	37.8 GL	Around 102 GL	Current – November-Dec – fish recruitment and Macquarie Marshes (extend duration) - around 65 GL total delivery
Namoi	Nov – Dec 2018	1.2 GL		Summer: refuge waterholes just downstream Keepit
Peel	June 2018	0.0 GL	1.9 GL	-
Gwydir	January 2020	20.9 GL	22.6 GL	Summer refuge river and creek waterholes to around Moree
Border Rivers     	May 2019	2.2 GL	*Pindari Stimulus Flow (SF) 3.6 GL Translucency payback approx. 10 GL	NSW 4.4GL SF done. CEWO - Summer refuge waterholes downstream Pindari, Glenlyon

## 5. What's the current situation now?

Currently NSW Northern Basin – many places now low or in some places, nil flows

<https://realtimedata.watarnsw.com.au/>



### Happened/Happening:

- Macquarie Marshes CW-NSW deliveries
- NSW Border Rivers NSW managed planned environmental water (PEW) deliveries

### Coming up:

- Limited or nil CW-NSW env. water deliveries from dams in other regulated catchments
- WaterNSW - Irrigation bulk releases out of Pindari, Copeton, Keepit (late Nov-Dec 2020)

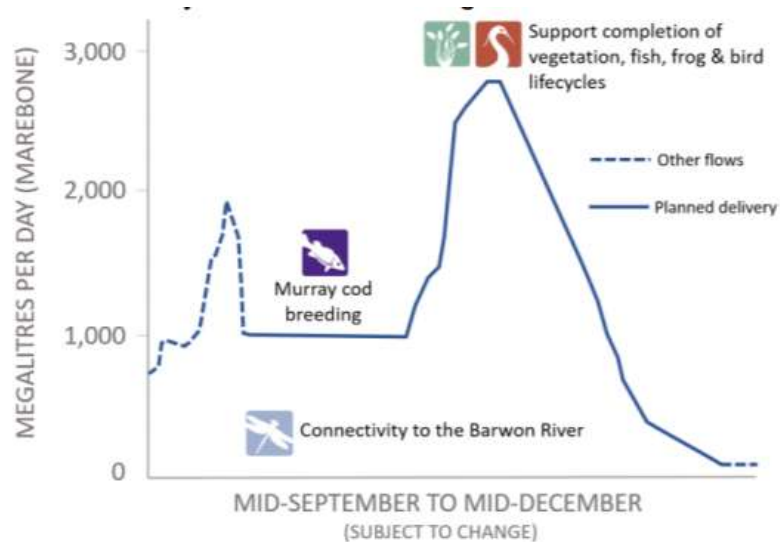
### Hoping:

- Waiting for good rains for unregulated catchments – flows in Condamine-Balonne, Barwon-Darling and for downstream flows in other systems and to increase storage dam levels



## 5. What's happening now?

### Macquarie – fish, wetland & EOS flows – joint NSW & CW



Deliveries will be managed adaptively to maximise the benefits, minimise disruptive inundation and respond to changing conditions.



*Murray cod, Macquarie River (Jerom Stocks, NSW DPI-Fisheries)*

<https://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/f70ec505-164a-4d70-b55b-f292e90ce678/files/macquarie-river-valley-2020-21-event-update-1.pdf>



Australian Government  
Commonwealth Environmental Water Office

Macquarie River Valley 2020–21  
Event Update #1

A plan for drought recovery

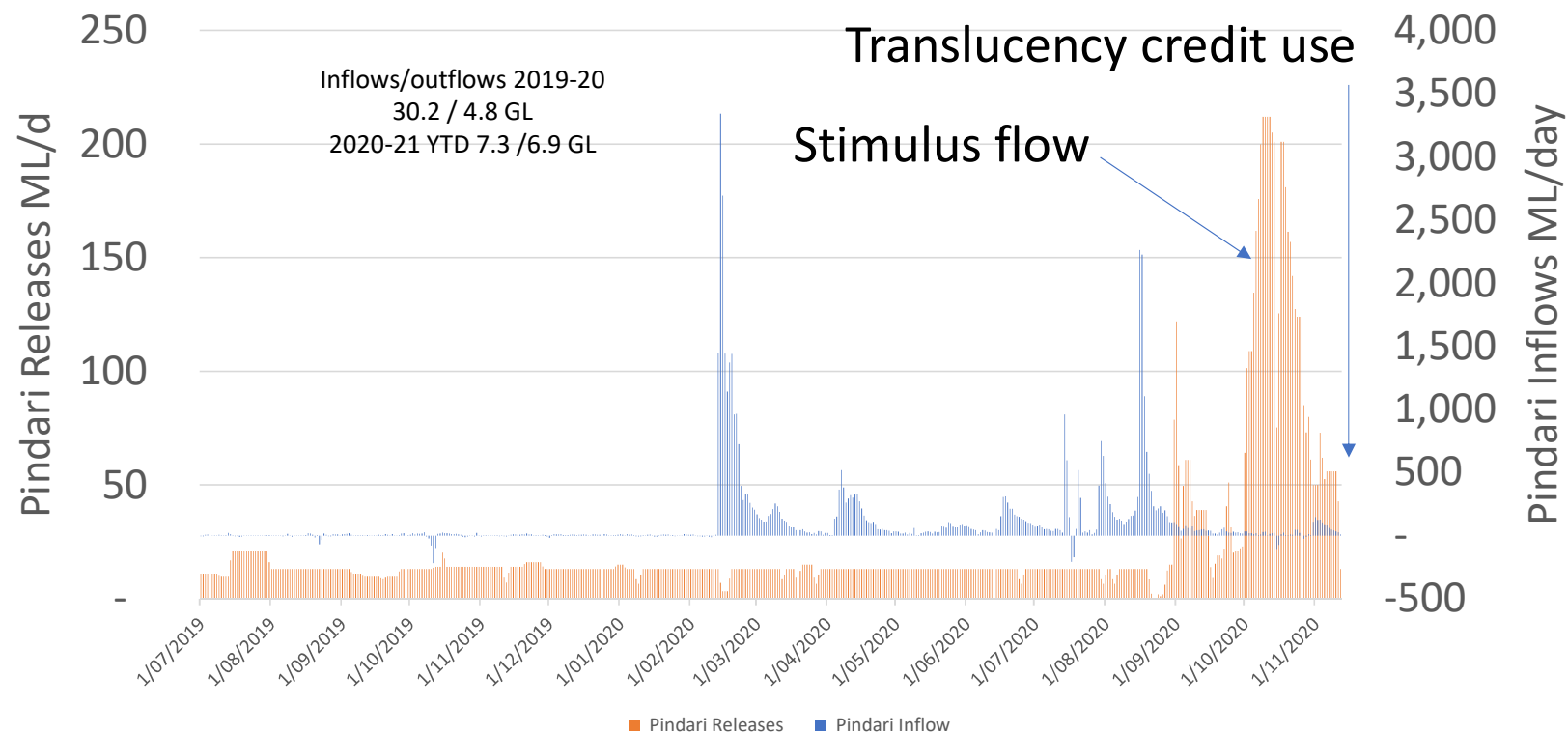
Rainfall in 2020 has provided a welcome respite from the extreme drought of 2017 to 2019. The Macquarie valley landscape, river flows and water availability have all begun to recover. This update...

These flows aim to support Murray cod nesting and provide breeding opportunities for other native fish such as carp gudgeon and un-specked hardyhead. Ensuring nests are not exposed or disrupted is...

# 5. What's happening now?

## Border Rivers – NSW managed PEW flows

Pindari Dam 1 July 2019 - 12 November 2020



Information at <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/news/drought-recovery-flow-for-native-fish-in-severn-river>





## 6. Community engagement

- **WHYs** – water for the environment is community water, community involvement, local and connections, local knowledge and involvement, improved deliveries and outcomes
- **WHOMs** - other departments, organizations in water & NRM, monitoring, schools, local Aboriginal groups and people, landholders, irrigation, ++
- **HOWs** - Two -way, sharing knowledge and experiences, updates, maps, Twitters, calls, videos, online
- **WHEREs** - places, on the ground, meetings, visits, where manage water





# Communications

## Tweet

Environmental Water @theCEWH · 29 Oct  
Two catfish swim into a refuge pool at Moree. One fish says, "do you come here often?"

"Not for 55 days!" said the other.

It's been a while since refuge pools have had a drink, and recent rainfall is helping catfish catch-up.

#GwydirFlow Update 1: [bit.ly/2HFkKwU](https://bit.ly/2HFkKwU)



13 20




In partnership with:  
**Department of Planning,  
Industry and Environment**

## Macquarie River Valley 2020–21: Event Update #2

30 October 2020

### Flows for fish and wetlands

Delivery of NSW and Commonwealth water for the environment in the Macquarie catchment began in early October 2020. This water is supporting the recovery of native fish, particularly Murray cod, and core wetland vegetation in the Macquarie Marshes.



Macquarie Marshes, spring 2020 (CEWO)

### Why deliver water now?

Murray cod spawn from submerged nests during spring when water temperatures are above 18°C. Much of the spawning is expected to occur this year around Trangie. Providing relatively stable flows using water for the environment during this time to keep nests underwater will give these fish the best opportunity to successfully breed this year.

The timing and duration of flows to the Macquarie Marshes is also critical for the recovery of this internationally significant wetland system. Rainfall and tributary flows in early 2020 have helped to inundate parts of the Marshes and have primed many plants to be ready to grow, flower, and set seed. Plants in core wetland areas typically need 2–3 months of inundation over the post-frost months to allow them to flourish. This gives them a better chance to out-compete weeds such as *Ippia* and

noogoora burr. More water is also needed in October and November to help wetland animals such as frogs and waterbirds to breed and young to grow and disperse. Some of these flows may come from tributaries downstream of Burrendong – we'll adapt to natural flows as they come.


### Progress of the flow

Since early October this water has targeted a relatively stable flow between 1,000 to 2,000 ML/day in the mid-Macquarie River as planned to support Murray cod nesting. Water temperatures downstream of Dubbo have reached above 18°C for several weeks in October, which is suitable for cod breeding.



Murray cod larvae from the Macquarie River in October 2020 (NSW DPI – Fisheries)

Once the key spawning time of early October has passed, flows will increase in November to provide opportunities for newly hatched fish to disperse while still maintaining inundation in the Marshes and connection to the Barwon. The increased duration of a connection between the Macquarie and Barwon Rivers will provide opportunities for migratory fish species, such as golden, silver and spangled perch to move into the lower parts of the Macquarie River, through the Marshes and further upstream.



Australian Government  
Commonwealth Environmental Water Office



In partnership with:  
**Department of Planning,  
Industry and Environment**

## Gwydir refuge pool flow 2020 – Update 1, 27 October

### Helping fish recover from the drought

<b>Objectives:</b>	Native fish survival by providing access to refuge habitat and food, increasing connectivity and improving water quality in pools
<b>Dates:</b>	Late Spring to Summer 2020–21
<b>Volume:</b>	12 – 14 GL has been allocated
<b>Other flows:</b>	Where possible, deliveries will be coordinated with releases from Copeton Dam for other purposes
<b>Target areas:</b>	Large refuge pools in the Gwydir between Copeton Dam and Tyrell Weir, Mehi between Tareeleroi and Combadello Weir and Carole Creek to near Garah.

### How is the system looking now?

Since April 2020, flows along the Gwydir River have decreased and some channels within the lower Gwydir have stopped flowing. One area of concern is the Mehi River upstream of Combadello Weir, which is about 20 km southwest of Moree. Parts of this river have not flowed since August 2020.

Recent monitoring has shown that deep pools along the upper Mehi River provide important refuge habitat for native fish during extended dry periods.



Natural refuge pools along the Mehi River between Moree and Combadello Weir (10 January 2020). Photo: UNE



Mehi River upstream of Edward Street River Pool / downstream of Moree Town Weir (19 October 2020). Photo: CEWO

### Pool refuge flows

If flows from upstream systems do not provide water into the Mehi River soon, Commonwealth and NSW water for the environment may be used to replenish pools along the Mehi River through Moree and downstream to Combadello Weir. The last time water for the environment was delivered here from storage was January 2020.

To fit in with local farmers' winter crops, water for the environment will not be used for watercourse-wetland areas along the lower Gwydir and Gingham until after winter crop harvests have been completed. Natural flows may still occur in this area at any time.

### What happened last year

The 2019–20 water year in the Gwydir system began very dry and finished quite wet. Very low falls occurred between July and December 2019. The 2019 calendar year was the driest recorded since 1963. Above average rainfall occurred in January to April 2020, which saw several flows through the full length of the river system. Very heavy rainfall resulted in localised inundation in areas west of Moree in February and March 2020.

Monitoring of refuge pools during spring and summer 2019–20 showed that during no flow periods, water quality and depth within pools declined significantly. Maintaining water quality and depth is important within larger refuge pools to provide native fish species with the best chance of survival. This was the focus of our watering last year.

Results from monitoring undertaken along the Gwydir River between May to July 2020 showed most native fish species had spawned and recruited in the past year. Whilst the overall numbers of native fish were modest, most individuals sampled appeared in good health.

Native fish were found in the upper Mehi River, a channel that experienced poor water quality during spring and early summer of 2019–20. This is a positive sign that the fish community in this part of the system is recovering.



Some of the places and people!









## 7. MDA & Local Councils engagement

### **Potential discussion points:**

- Advice re what is needed and wanted?
- With MDA, Councils
- Any advice/links re other groups?
- The what, when, where and how?  
(eg. What sort of information needed, frequency, types - is it phone calls, emails, updates, videos, meetings, how often, at meetings, updates??)
- Options for sharing information via websites, radio, local papers, videos, Twitter, Facebook, meetings??
- Any thoughts re this would be appreciated.



## *Postscript: Additional Information for queries from meeting:*

1. **CEWO submissions to various water related matters are available at:**

<https://www.environment.gov.au/water/cewo/publications#submissions>

2. **Re water diversion schemes such as the Bradfield and Clarence proposals:** They require investigation on economic, social and environmental costs and benefits to establish if feasible, viable and justifiable. Bradfield Scheme has some information is available online re the history or this. The information includes that 'The viability of the Bradfield Scheme as an irrigation plan has been dismissed many times by experts over the past 80 years. The scheme has been rebutted on scientific, engineering and economic grounds.' Currently Qld doing an initial assessment of a modified version to see if/what may feasible and viable:

<https://www.dnrme.qld.gov.au/land-water/initiatives/bradfield-regional-assessment-development-panel>

3. **CEWO Role:** The Australian Government owns entitlements to water in the Murray-Darling Basin. This water is used to keep our rivers healthy, so they may continue to support communities for future generations. This water is referred to as water for the environment. The Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH) is an independent statutory position established under the Water Act 2007. The CEWH leads, and is supported by, the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office (CEWO). The CEWO is a division of the federal Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.



If you would like further information or to discuss any of this along with any further questions, comments, feedback, this is welcome now (and anytime)

Thanks for the opportunity to share and discuss with you today at the MDA Region 11 Councils meeting



**Jane Humphries**

Local Engagement Officer, Northern Basin  
Commonwealth Environmental Water Office



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**Commonwealth Environmental Water Office**  
**Department of Agriculture, Water and**  
**Environment**



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