

# Murray Darling Association Inc

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## Region 9 Ordinary Meeting

Date: 25 May 2017, Start Time: 10:15pm

Location: Leeton Shire Council Chambers - 23-25 Chelmsford Place, Leeton NSW 2705

## MINUTES

### 1. ATTENDANCE

#### 1.1 Present

Cr Mayor Paul Maytom	Leeton Shire Council
Greg Verdon	Riverina Water County Council
Emma Bradbury	MDA
Cr Paul Funnell	Wagga Wagga City Council
James Maguire	Office of Environment & Heritage
Liz Stott	MDBA
Joe Burns	Member
Russell Campbell	Carrathool Shire
Annette Waters	MDA
Cr John Dal Broi	Griffith City Council
Cr Jenny Clarke	Narrandera Shire Council
Angela Stevens	Leeton Shire Council
Jackie Kruger	Leeton Shire Council

#### 1.2 Apologies

Graham Haley	Riverina Water County Council
David Webb	Lockhart
Peter Waterman	
Mark Gooden	
Neville Kschenka	
Bede Meecham	
Wesley Hall	
Judy Charlton	Narrandera Shire
Robert Knight	Wagga Wagga City Council
Kay Whitehead	
Brett Stonestreet	Griffith City Council
Cr Roger Schirmer	
Allan Tonkin	Snowy Valley Council
Peter Veneris	Lockhart Shire Council
Brett Lewis	
Dave Fenton	
Bede Spennagle	

**Motion:** That apologies be accepted.

Joe Burns/Greg Verdon

## **2. WELCOME**

### **2.1 Mayor's/Chair's welcome**

Cr Mayor Paul Maytom welcomed everyone to Leeton and thanked them for coming. He acknowledged the traditional landowners. He also acknowledged and welcomed Annette Waters (MDA EA) and Angela Stevens who took on the role from Debbie Evans as secretarial support for Region 9 Chair. He thanked Debbie for her previous support in the role. He acknowledged the presenters (James and Tom Cheeson).

## **3. MINUTES**

The last meeting was held on 16 March 2017 at Leeton Shire Council Chambers, 23-25 Chelmsford Pl, Leeton NSW 2705

**Motion:** That the minutes of the last Region 16 March 2017 meeting be accepted.  
Russell Campbell/Joe Burns

## **4. BUSINESS ARISING**

### **4.1 Member council briefing papers for inclusion in the Region 9 Regional Plan**

Must showcase and articulate issues of water

Russell Campbell enquired about the Clarence River Diversion Scheme - Emma said that she had written to both Griffith City Council and DPI for further information but was yet to hear back - Ongoing

### **4.2 Update on 2017 Conference Program**

Registrations are now open and program information is available on the website. Motions for the conference close in August

### **4.3 Lachlan River Flows**

Russell Campbell asked for the REO (Liz Stott) to be aware of the Lachlan river flows with regard to the Murray Darling Basin Plan saying that towns such as Hillston had lost too much water.

It was also stated that Warren (through Northern Basin Review) had a reduction of 70 GL recommended.

Liz Stott said that it would remain at 70GL water recovery the MDBA had recommended but the minister was yet to sign off.

### **4.4 Motions from Meeting**

That the Murray Darling Association write to the MDBA to:

a) Note Region 9's concern regarding a historical and ongoing lack of communication between the MDBA and stakeholders in the Wagga Wagga region in the development and implementation of the Basin Plan.

b) Request a Brief Report/Briefing Note on the relationship between communities, water holdings and storages in the Wagga Wagga area and the 2017 Basin Plan evaluation process

c) Invite the MDBA to meet with MDA Members of the Wagga Wagga area including Wagga Wagga City Council and Riverina Water County Council to explore opportunities for constructive collaboration.

All motions moved by Paul Funnell and seconded Gerg Verdon

**5. REPORTS**

**5.1 Chief Executive Officer's Report** (see attached)

**6. GUEST PRESENTATIONS**

**6.1 Mr James Maguire from Office Environment and Heritage - Update**  
See attached slides

**6.2 2017 Evaluation of the Basin Plan - Murray Darling Basin Association's approach, local government's contribution presented by Colin Mues, Chief Economist, Murray Darling Basin Authority**  
see attached slides

**6.3 Mr Tom Cheeson - National Carp Control Plan**

**7. NEXT MEETING:** 17 August 2017 at Leeton Shire Council Chambers commencing at 1pm for a 1:30pm start

**8. CLOSE:** 1.20pm

*The Murray Darling Association acknowledges and thanks  
Leeton Shire Council for arranging and hosting this meeting of Region 9.*



## Stakeholder notification

### River fresh (water delivery) event

#### July 2017 - Murrumbidgee & Yanco Creek systems

Information for landholders, local councils, recreational river users and other stakeholders along the Murrumbidgee River and Yanco Creek systems regarding a plan to deliver a low level 'river fresh' during Winter 2017.

##### What is this 'river fresh' flow?

It is a temporary increase in river level due to a higher flow rate that will sit well within the river channel.

##### Why is it being done?

To improve the health of wetlands along the mid-Murrumbidgee river.

When connected to the river these wetlands provide critical breeding and foraging habitat for native fish, waterbirds, frogs and other fauna. They support native wetland plants which help to improve water quality and help to produce zooplankton, insects and crustaceans which are important food for juvenile fish. This water delivery will also help to move nutrients and carbon back into the river during winter when the water is cooler, supporting the river food web.

During the drought years (2002-2010), hundreds of wetlands along the Murrumbidgee River that normally connect to the river remained dry. These wetlands suffered and are in need of more regular inundation to help them recover.

Most of these wetlands connected during Spring 2016 floods but have since dried out or water levels have dropped to low levels. Monitoring of these sites indicate that many contain native fish including golden perch as well as young long- and short-necked turtles. This flow will help to reconnect these wetlands, improve their vegetation characteristics and will allow for native fauna and fish movement back into the river.

##### Whose water is it?

Water allocation is being made available by the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder and from NSW environmental water allowances.

##### How much water will be released and for how long?

The planned total volume is up to 200 gigalitres (GL). The actual amount will depend on allocation levels for 2017/18 water year and operational conditions, including season and local inflow status. Depending on these conditions, the duration of the event is planned to be 5 days in the upstream river reaches, increasing to 12 days further downstream, **as indicated in Table 1.**

Releases would be planned for low base flow periods (minimum required flows in the river) and when little to no rainfall is forecast.

### **What river level is the flow expected to reach?**

The environmental water releases are **targeted to reach a river level of 3.7m (or 20,000 ML/d) at Wagga Wagga. This is far below the minor flood level of 7.3m** and slightly below peak irrigation season water levels of summer 2013.

A flow height of 3.7m is known to be of minimal inconvenience to river stakeholders. If heavy rainfall is unexpectedly predicted after the planned release of environmental water, river operation will be managed accordingly. The event may be postponed or immediately ceased, so as to minimise the chances of exceeding the target river levels.

The flow recession will be gradual (modelled natural rate of recession) with the aim of minimising river bank erosion.

### **When will it happen?**

Due to high late season irrigation demand and ongoing maintenance works at Berembled Weir this event has been delayed from an earlier May/June plan.

The water delivery is scheduled to **commence in mid July 2017**. Expected travel times and indicative river levels for Gundagai, Wagga and downstream locations are shown in **Table 1**. below.

Stakeholders will be notified (via email and SMS) once the commencement of water delivery has been confirmed.

If this water delivery event is cancelled, stakeholders will also be notified as soon as this decision is made.

### **Will it affect me?**

If you have land or infrastructure (eg. pumps) that are normally affected by rising Murrumbidgee River levels then there is a possibility that you could be affected. As the proposed release is well below the minor flood level, effects are expected to be minimal.

See **Table 1** for predicted river heights at specific gauge locations.

OEH has consulted with neighbouring landholders to identify and address potential effects of these flows.

OEH and partner agencies will continue to work with landholders to address their concerns about the effects of river flows.

If you think you may be affected by this proposed flow event please contact OEH as soon as possible.

Landholders who lease areas of their floodplain property should forward this information on to lessees.

### **Who is responsible for the event?**

OEH manages and plans environmental water allocations in NSW and is the lead agency for planning this environmental flow event. Water NSW manages water orders, deliveries and operates the river for all water users.

Partnering agencies include Water NSW, DPI Water, Riverina Local Land Services (RLLS) and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office (CEWO).

### **How will I be notified if this planned flow is occurring?**

OEH staff will manage the *pre-event* communications and Water NSW will take over during the *water release* phase. Communication will continue for the duration of the event through the provision of regular event updates to website (Link below), local media and contact lists, or via direct calls with OEH.

Together we will provide regular communication updates to:

#### **Landholders/managers**

Landholders or stakeholders who wish to be kept informed of the planning and delivery of this environmental water should *contact us as soon as possible* – see below.

**Local councils** – to ensure infrastructure such as roads or drainage systems are being monitored.

**Project partners** – to ensure all partners are aware of the details of the proposed event and that potential risks are identified and managed within a risk management strategy.

**SES** – will be notified by OEH prior to any releases as a courtesy and preventative measure. However, as the proposed flow (3.7m) is **below** the minor flood level (7.3m) at Wagga, it is not anticipated that the SES will be involved in flow-related operations.

**Public information** – OEH updates will be issued to local newspapers and radio stations to inform the wider Murrumbidgee community of the environmental water release and the objectives of the flow. Regular event updates will be posted on the OEH website at:

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/environmentalwater/murrumbidgee-news.htm>

### **Where do I get more information?**

If you would like to be informed via SMS or email on progress of planning and implementation of the proposed Murrumbidgee 'river fresh' flow then please send an email to:

#### **James Maguire**

Senior Environmental Water Management Officer - Murrumbidgee

NSW Office of Environment and Heritage

Ph: (02) 6022 0604

Email: [james.maguire@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:james.maguire@environment.nsw.gov.au)

**Table 1. Predicted river heights for proposed 2017 Murrumbidgee River Fresh event**

Location	Height (m)	Discharge (ML)	Peak Duration (days)	Travel time from Burrinjuck
Gundagai	3.6 to 3.9 <sup>1</sup>	17,400 to 20,000	5-6	1.5 days
Wagga	3.4 -3.7 <sup>2</sup>	18,000 -20,000	5-6	2 days
Narrandera	4.5-4.8	16,300-19,000	5-6	5 days
Yanco Creek Offtake	3.0 to 3.3	1,300 to 1,600 <sup>3</sup>	6-7	6 days
Yanco Creek @ Morundah	2.1 to 2.2	800-900	6-7	7 days
Collombo Creek @ Morundah	1.6 to 1.8	500-600	6-7	7 days
Darlington Point	4.2 to 4.5	14,400 to 16,400	6-7	7 days
Carrathool	4.2 to 4.5	12,000 to 13,400	7-8	10 days
D/S Hay Weir	5.0 to 5.3	11,500 to 12,700	8-9	12 days
D/S Maude Weir	4.8 to 5.1	10,200 to 11,200	9-10	13 days
D/S Redbank Weir	5.3 to 5.6	8,190 to 9,070	9-10	15 days
D/S Balranald Weir	5.1 to 5.4	6,630 to 7,560	10-12	18 days

<sup>1</sup> similar to maximum irrigation flow levels in full allocation years

<sup>2</sup> lower than any previous environmental flow event

<sup>3</sup> the current DPI Water approval specifies environmental flow levels up to 2,600ML/day at the Yanco Creek Offtake (YCO), however with the proposed low target level at Wagga, the predicted peak YCO flow is unlikely to exceed 1,600ML/day.

Note: The actual river heights and flow durations may vary slightly from the above estimates as a result of 'other river operations' which are not related to the delivery of this environmental water event – these may include *base irrigation demand and weir pool levels*.

## Murrumbidgee Environmental flow update

- Information updates – follow up re: items from last meetings minutes (Terry Korodaj)
- Environmental watering plans for 2017-18

**James Maguire – NSW OEH**



## Items raised in last meeting minutes

- EWAG membership update – following EWAG review OEH recommendation is with the ministers office
- OEH is proposing for the EWAG to be a statutory group and members formally appointed and paid sitting fees etc
- OEH will formally seek continued Mid-Murrumbidgee landholder membership – continued event based observer attendance too
- Bank slumping – OEH/CEWO only water users to insist on natural rates of flow recession 15%/day @ Wagga and 10% lower reaches
- E-water volumes in dams ~ 71GL of EWA and 8.5 GL of OEH GS currently available vs 1,745GL stored in both dams – 4.6%
- Last year before the spill OEH water accounted for 6% of dam volumes

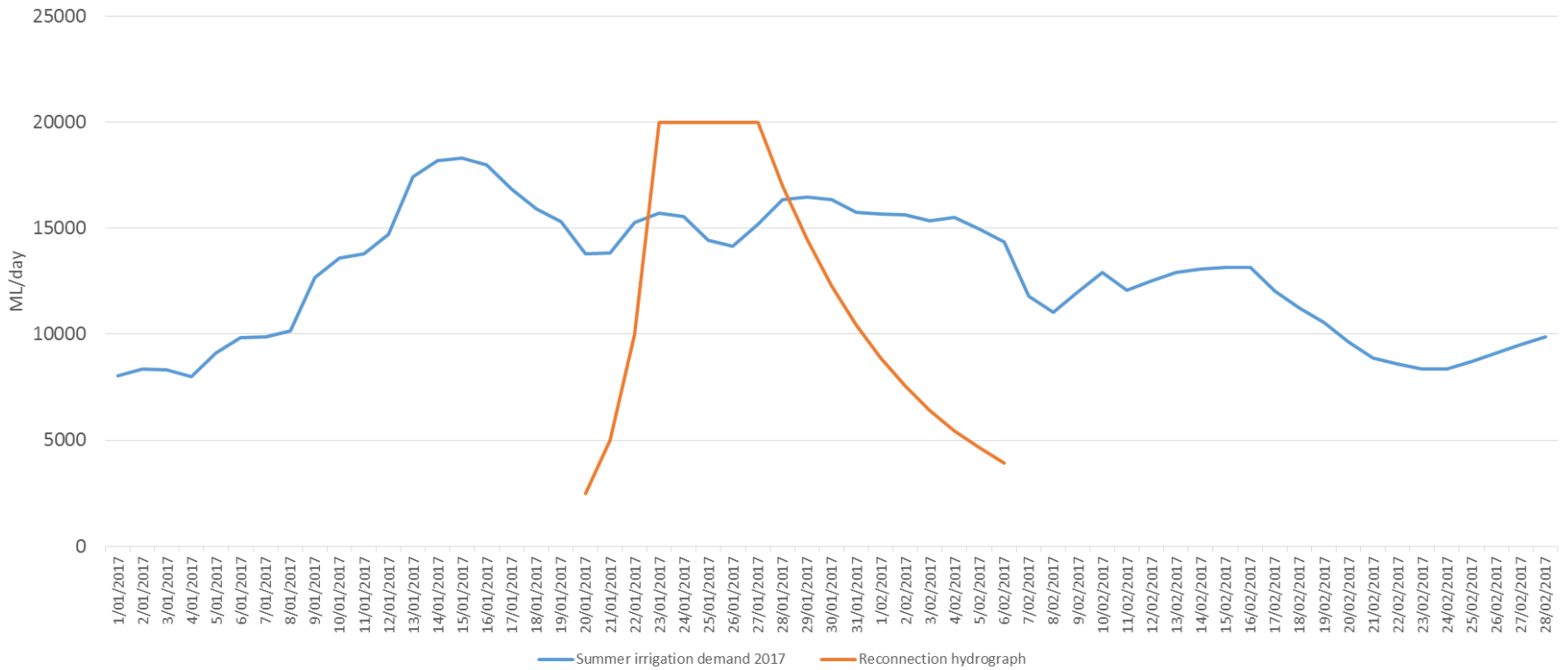
## CMS and OEH approach to high flows

- DPI water is still leading the CMS project in both Murray and Murrumbidgee valleys
- EWAG meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> March – CMS update was provided – CMS still proposing flows to 40GL/day at Wagga and buffer to 45GL, 150M available but no timeframes provided
- OEH is not aware of any progress on the CMS since last stakeholder risk assessment meeting in Wagga
- Irrespective of CMS, OEH will continue to work with landholders on low lying properties to address e-flow related issues eg improved high flow access, weed management and better fencing
- Riparian stakeholders comms re: e-flows - OEH continues its lead role with assistance from CEWO. Outside EWAG terms of reference – not EWAG role

## Planned Murrumbidgee wetland reconnection flow

- Timing is a result of temporary? low flow constraints, unusually high late irrigation season demand, dam and weir maintenance etc
- Stand alone flow (not piggyback) targeting very low base flow period (low risk) and very low irrigation demand (low losses)
- Current start date ~23<sup>rd</sup> June (Dam Releases)
- Event will be postponed if significant rainfall forecast
- Peak target is 3.70 m or 20,000ML/day @ Wagga
- Duration 5-6 days at peak, 15% recession @ Wagga (modelled natural to minimise slumping)
- Total volume 170-200 GL (dependant on starting allocation levels)
- Water ordered at Balranald Weir and Darlot (2017/18 event)

Flows at Wagga





# 2001 peak irrigation flows @ Wagga

## DPI Water

HYPLOT V133 Output 24/05/2017

01/11/2000 to 01/03/2001

2000-01

Site 410001 MURRUMBIDGEE RIVER AT WAGGA WAGGA

100.00

Level (Metres)

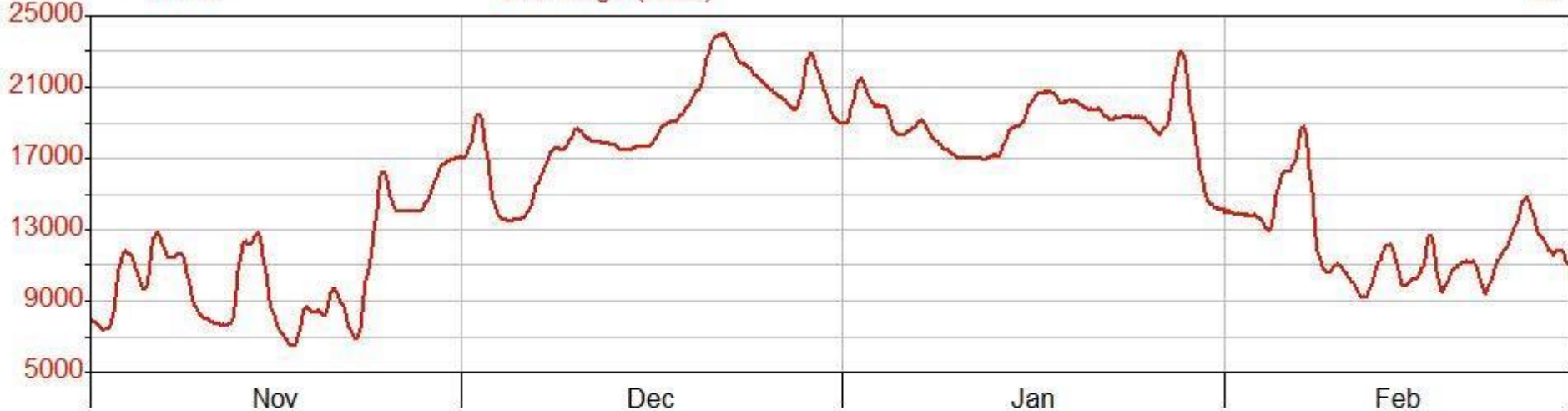
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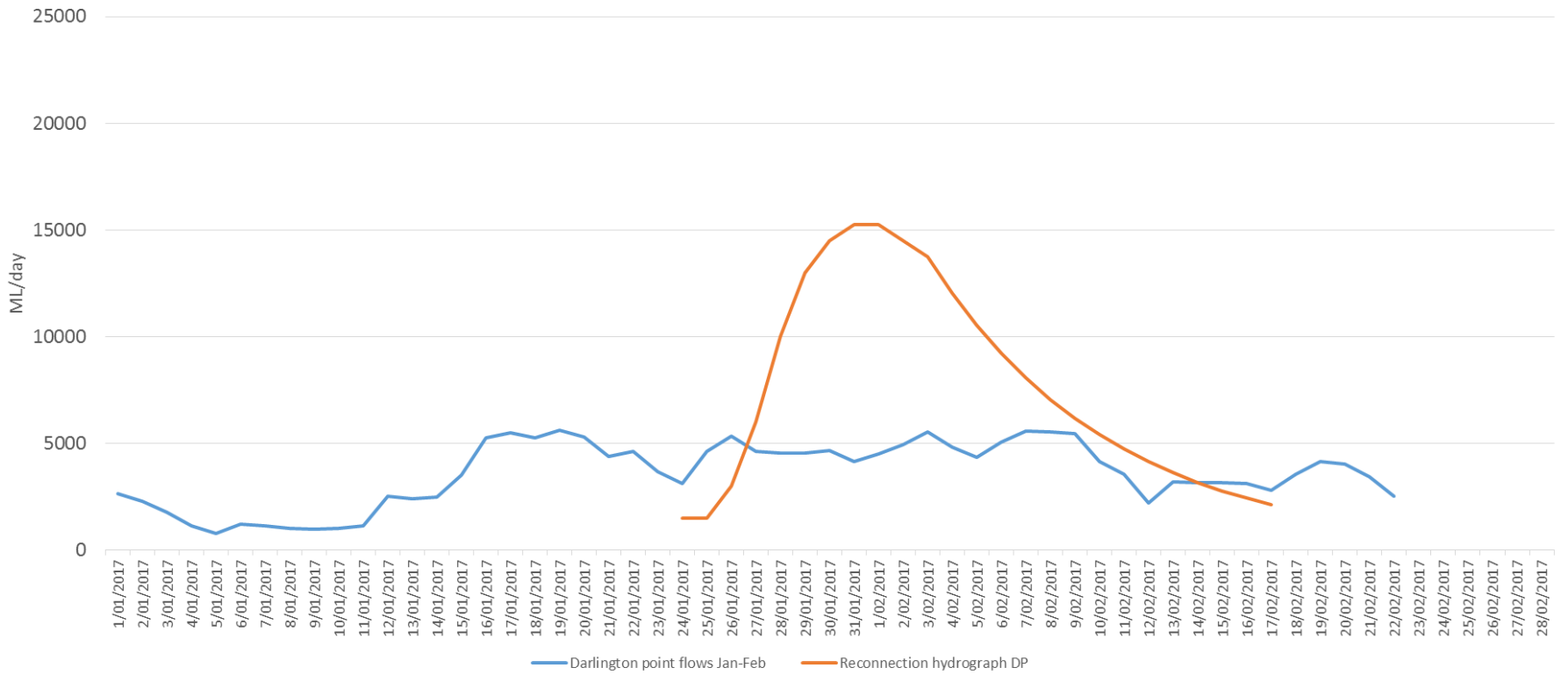
141.00

Discharge (ML/d)

CP



### Flows at Darlington Point



## Predicted river heights for proposed 2017 Murrumbidgee River Fresh event

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## Mid-bidgee wetlands – recovery comparison

- McKennas Lagoon - 5km east Carrathool
- No inundation for 9 years (2001 – 2009)
- Flooded 2010, 2012, 2016
- Complete aquatic vegetation loss - 2011
- Significant river red gum encroachment - 2013
- Very limited aquatic vegetation re-establishment and limited RRG regen drowning - 2017
- Decades from returning to former condition



# McKennis Lagoon



McKennas Lagoon 2017



## Mid-bidgee wetlands – recovery comparison cont

- Yarradda Lagoon - 20kms west D.Point
- No river connections 2001 - 2009
- Pumped 2014 with no carp, colonial bird breeding, red watermilfoil, vallisneria and spiny mudgrass
- PWS Grazing lease terminated Dec 2014
- Pumped 2015 – SBF return, CBB, tall spike rush
- Flooded 2016 – SBF, CBB (+Ibis, Spoonbills, Egrets) Golden Perch (LTIM)

# Yarradda Lagoon, Feb 2017 - V.Bucello





