



Murray Darling Association Inc.

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463 High Street
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Region 4 Ordinary Meeting

Tuesday 8 December 2020 – 1:00pm EDT

Venue: The Midway Centre, 6 Midway Drive, Buronga, NSW or
Via Video Conference

AGENDA

1. ATTENDANCE

2. APOLOGIES

3. CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES – Ordinary Meeting 8 September

4. BUSINESS ARISING

5. REPORTS

The following verbal reports to be provided:

5.1 Report from the Chair – Cr MacAllister

5.2 Council Reports – each Council to provide a verbal update of activities from their region

5.3 Water Meetings Attended

6. GENERAL BUSINESS

6.1 MDA Change of Name – Attachment 1

6.2 Climate Ready Communities – Attachment 2

6.3 NSW ICAC Report – [ICAC Report](#)

6.4 Project Proposal – Murrumbidgee River: “Yanga Lake – Murrumbidgee River e-Water Optimisation Project: Improving Connectivity”

6.5 Western Weirs Program – Attachments 3 & 4

6.6 Proposed Legislative Amendments for Floodplain Harvesting in NSW – [Click here](#)

6.7 Menindee Lakes Water Saving Project

6.8 MDA Conference 2021

6.9 MDA Submission to the NSW Border Rivers: Floodplain Harvesting in Water Sharing Plans – Attachment 5

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING Proposed 9 March 2020 & 8 June 2020 AGM

8. CLOSE

*The Murray Darling Association acknowledges and thanks
Wentworth Shire Council for their support in
hosting this meeting of Region 4.*



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Venue: The Midway Centre, 6 Midway Drive, Buronga, NSW or
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MINUTES

1. ATTENDANCE

Meeting opened at 1:23pm

In Person	By Teleconference
Cr Jane MacAllister (Wentworth Shire Council)	Cr Darriea Turley (Broken Hill City Council)
Cr Jason Modica (Mildura Rural City Council)	Emma Bradbury (CEO – MDA)
Ken Ross (Wentworth Shire Council)	Greg Hill (Central Darling Shire Council)
Cr Steve Heywood (Wentworth Shire Council)	Gavin Helgeland (Balranald Shire Council)
Cr Tim Elstone (Wentworth Shire Council)	Cr Marion Browne (Broken Hill Shire Council)
Gayle Marsden (Wentworth Shire Council)	
Chloe Horne (Wentworth Shire Council)	

2. APOLOGIES

Cr Anthony Cirrillo

Motion

That the apology from Cr Cirillo be accepted.

Moved: Cr Modica

Seconded: Cr Elstone

CARRIED

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cr MacAllister declared that she is employed by the Nature Conservation Council.

4. CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

That the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 June 2020 be accepted as circulated.

Moved: Cr Turley

Seconded: Cr Modica

5. BUSINESS ARISING

- The letter of congratulations was sent to Cr Thurley and a thank you was received.
- This Region continues to support a Royal Commission into the MDBA.
- There were no motions for the MDA Annual Conference from MDA Region 4
- Broken Hill City Council & Mildura Rural City Council has a Climate Policy the others don't

6. REPORTS

The following verbal reports to be provided:

6.1 MDA Report – Emma Bradbury & Cr MacAllister

- The Murray Darling Association's contribution to the productivity commission on water was based on the interests of all of the regions. The MDA aims to be a neutral body representing all Local Government areas and views.
- The Governments announcements regarding water buybacks has been welcomed by the MDA however, not all Regions agree.
- Water for the Environment special account – 450ML will not be recovered.
- Consistency from all Council's for the MDB connectivity of the river needs to be prioritized.
- Across all MDA Regions there is a consistent message of failings in community consultation and lack of reliance on scientific evidence by Government.

6.2 Council Reports – each Council to provide a verbal update of activities from their region

Balranald Shire Council

- Committing to a base line survey of Lake Yanga, Yanga Creek & Murrumbidgee River. The Baseline data for hydraulic survey will be used to gain an understanding of what water savings can be realised. Engaging with DPIE at the moment in regard to this project.
- Rolling out a program for drinking water policies – collecting data through water samples to optimize the quality of water

Broken Hill City Council

- Broken Hill City Council have taken a stand and moved motion regarding the SDLAM & Menindee SAG issues, which was passed unanimously.
- Discussions have been had with a student doing a thesis under Prof Richard Kingsford. The report will be used to present to Government. It will be an exposé regarding the construction of the Wentworth to Broken Hill pipeline.

Central Darling Shire Council

- Council has written to Minister Pavey & Minister Marshall regarding the SDLAM & Menindee SAG voicing disappointment. Council has also produced a media release on behalf of three Councils (Central Darling, Broken Hill & Wentworth) regarding the same issues. Currently there is still water flowing over the weir at Wilcannia and a small flow of water over Weir 32 as well. The Wilcannia Weir project has been deferred for 12 months for further environmental studies.
- Menindee Old Town Weir requires further works to remove remaining structure and silting. Timeframe is currently uncertain.

Mildura Rural City Council

- Passed water policy calling for a royal commission / register of water/ audit of flood plain harvesting. Politics runs the show rather than science. Need to talk to Politicians about the things they don't want to hear.

Wentworth Shire Council

- In line with other Councils Wentworth Shire Council have supported the Menindee SAG voicing disappointment with consultation and opposing the options put forward for the SDLAM. The communities opinions are being ignored. Environmental flows are needed for fish need to breed and if they don't release water the opportunity will be missed. ACCC interim report into the First Flush event has been released.
- Menindee Lakes and the river - how do you get the right balance? We are fighting to get water to the Menindee Lakes then the Department have announced they will let it go as quickly as they can. It seems the Top (Northern Basin) are doing what they like – the Bottom is getting a lot of water and the Middle (being Wilcannia to Wentworth) is missing out.

- Cate Fairman MP was here on the weekend talking to people about the NSW enquiry into the dams & state significant infrastructure.

6.3 Chair Cr MacAllister attended the following Water Meetings:

18 July 2020 - Menindee SDL Project Stakeholder Advisory Group

21 July 2020 - Critical Water Advisory Panel

12 August 2020 - Lower Darling Stakeholder Meeting

15 August 2020 - Informal meeting at Sunset Strip to discuss strategy and concerns

2 September 2020 - Lower Darling Stakeholder Meeting to be briefed on environmental watering including pulse for Murray Cod and Golden Perch breeding

7. GENERAL BUSINESS

7.1 Motions for MDA National Conference

There is a clash with Wentworth Shire Council Ordinary Council meeting and the MDA AGM so Wentworth Council representatives won't be able to attend.

CEO of the MDA requested that the following motions be closely looked at prior to the AGM.

Motion 5.8, 5.9, 5.13, 5.14 & 5.15

Voting for the conference - attendees will receive an email to attend the conference, you click a button and you are livestreamed into the event.

Cr Turley left meeting at 2.30pm

Emma Bradbury left meeting at 2.30pm

7.2 Menindee Lakes SDLAM (attachments)

For information only

7.3 Australia Institute document – Analysis of Unredacted Condamine-Balonne water valuation documents

For information only

7.4 Volume of water extracted from the February floods and how little made it to Menindee Lakes & the Wentworth Junction. Could the MDA support a scientific paper in how this affects the Health of the individual streams and over all system as well as birds flora and fauna?

Slattery & Johnson are currently working on a paper that will do estimates on volumes held in the Northern Basin and hence how much was taken.

7.5 Update on the Barkandji native title claim over the Darling Barka and how that may be used to help bring historic flows back to the system.

A Native Title claim was passed but there is no water attached to it.

7.6 Meeting Clash

Motion

That Region 4 write to the President, CEO & Board of the MDA expressing concern that a scheduling conflict with the Wentworth SC Council meeting and the AGM of the MDA especially considering that Wentworth Shire Council is the host of the 2021 Annual Conference.

Moved: Cr Browne

Seconded: Cr Modica

CARRIED

8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING Proposed 8 December 2020

9 CLOSE 2.50pm

The Murray Darling Association acknowledges and thanks

*Wentworth Shire Council for their support in
hosting this meeting of Region 4.*

1. Why we are doing this

The Murray Darling Association has received consistent feedback from members and stakeholders in recent years which has identified that the MDA needs to strengthen its identity as a local government association.

At its 2020 Annual General Meeting, the Murray Darling Association membership resolved at Motion 2020-5.18 to take steps to change the organisation's name to the Murray-Darling Local Government Association following engagement with the membership to confirm the proposal.

The objective of this name change is to clearly identify the MDA as a local government association representing the interests of councils and communities across the Murray-Darling Basin to support Basin governments to deliver on their commitment to put Basin communities at the heart of the Basin Plan.

There is no legal impediment to the name change, with approval granted in 2019 by the Australian Securities and Investment Commission on advice from the Minister for Local Government for the Murray Darling Association to change their name to the Murray-Darling Local Government Association. The next step in this process is consultation with and approval by our members.

2. Why we want to hear from you

As a membership-based organization, the Murray Darling Association values the perspectives of our local government members across the Murray-Darling Basin. Your opinion is important and we would like to hear your thoughts about the proposed name-change.

3. Who are we talking to?

As part of our consultation, we are talking to:

- All MDA member councils, including Mayors, CEOs/GMs and delegates from all across the Murray-Darling Basin
- MDA Board Members, Strategic Advisory Group
- Local Government Associations

4. What are the opportunities?

Benefits of the MDA name change to Murray-Darling Local Government Association include opportunities to:

- Retain and increase membership of councils
- Reduce confusion of identity between the Murray Darling Association (MDA) and the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA);
- Better reflect and describe the role, purpose, context and work of the association

Murray Darling Association

Change of Name – Briefing Paper

- Accurately identify the MDA as an inter-jurisdictional association of councils operating across the Murray-Darling Basin.
- Support the association's ability to credibly compete for grant and project funding.
- Strengthen the credibility and authority of the association to represent the views of member councils in submissions and policy discussion.

5. What are the issues associated with name change?

Without a comprehensive consultation and rebranding strategy, a name-change could incur:

- Confusion amongst membership
- Complex process requiring resourcing

However, the MDA executive team is well-prepared to address the above two issues.

Following a vote on the name-change by the membership, the MDA executive will clearly and efficiently communicate the outcome to all members.

6. How can you provide feedback?

Providing feedback is easy. Please [click here](#) to participate in the survey.

7. What happens with the information you provide us with?

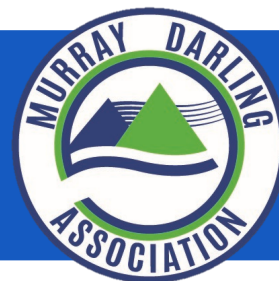
Your feedback will be collected confidentially and form part of a consultation report to be reviewed by the MDA board and executive prior to a decision about the name-change.

8. What's next?

All MDA members will be invited to participate in an extraordinary general meeting at the 2021 strategic workshop to vote on the proposed name change. We will advise members within 30 days of the meeting. Members will be able to attend in-person or virtually.

MDA Climate Change Region Template

Attachment 2



The Murray Darling Association (MDA) recognises that climate change is one of the most significant issues that will impact the social, cultural, economic and environmental health and wellbeing of the communities of the Murray-Darling Basin.

As a result, the MDA is currently developing its **Climate Change Position Statement and Action Plan**.

Your region's perspective is of critical importance and will directly inform the MDA's Basin-wide position statement .

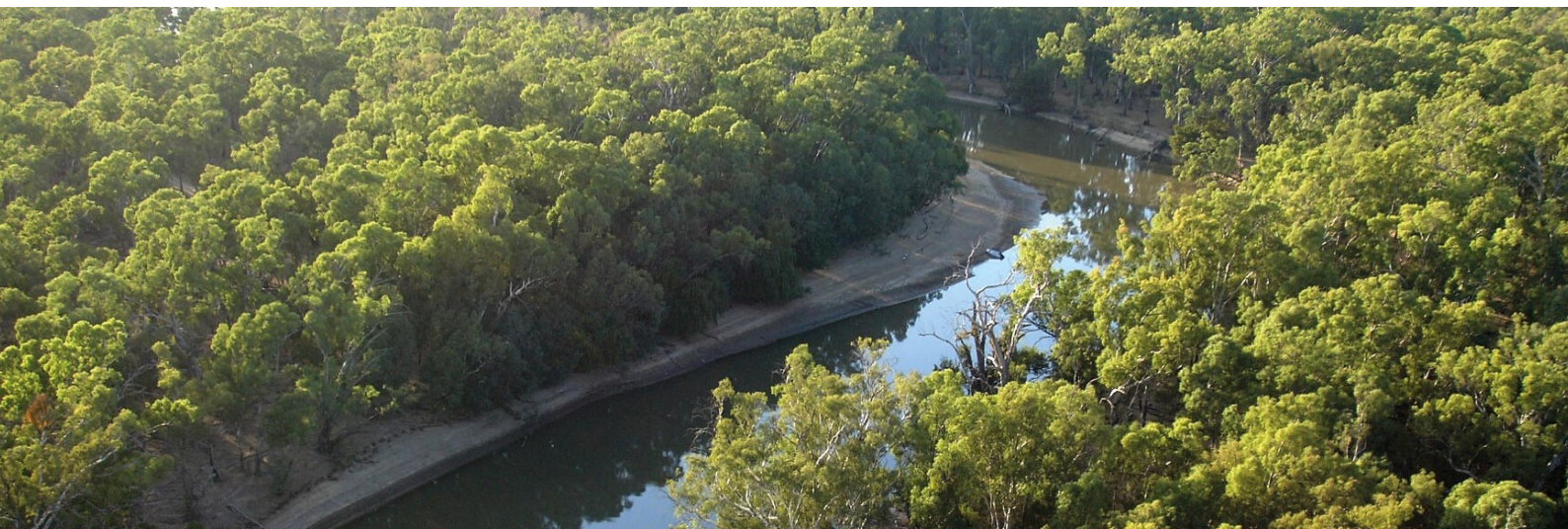
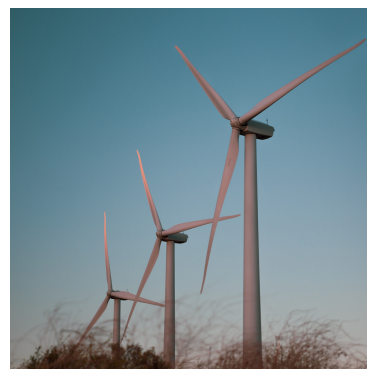
Please consult your region and provide a position statement for your region addressing the following:

- **Describe your region.**
- **What are your region's key priorities and issues?**
- **What are your region's commitment to 4 main actions to mitigate the impacts of climate change.**

(250 - 300 words)

The position statement should be completed, and sent to admin@mda.asn.au

Please include any high-quality photos of your region.





Please complete the following at your next region meeting.

Describe your region.

(250 words)

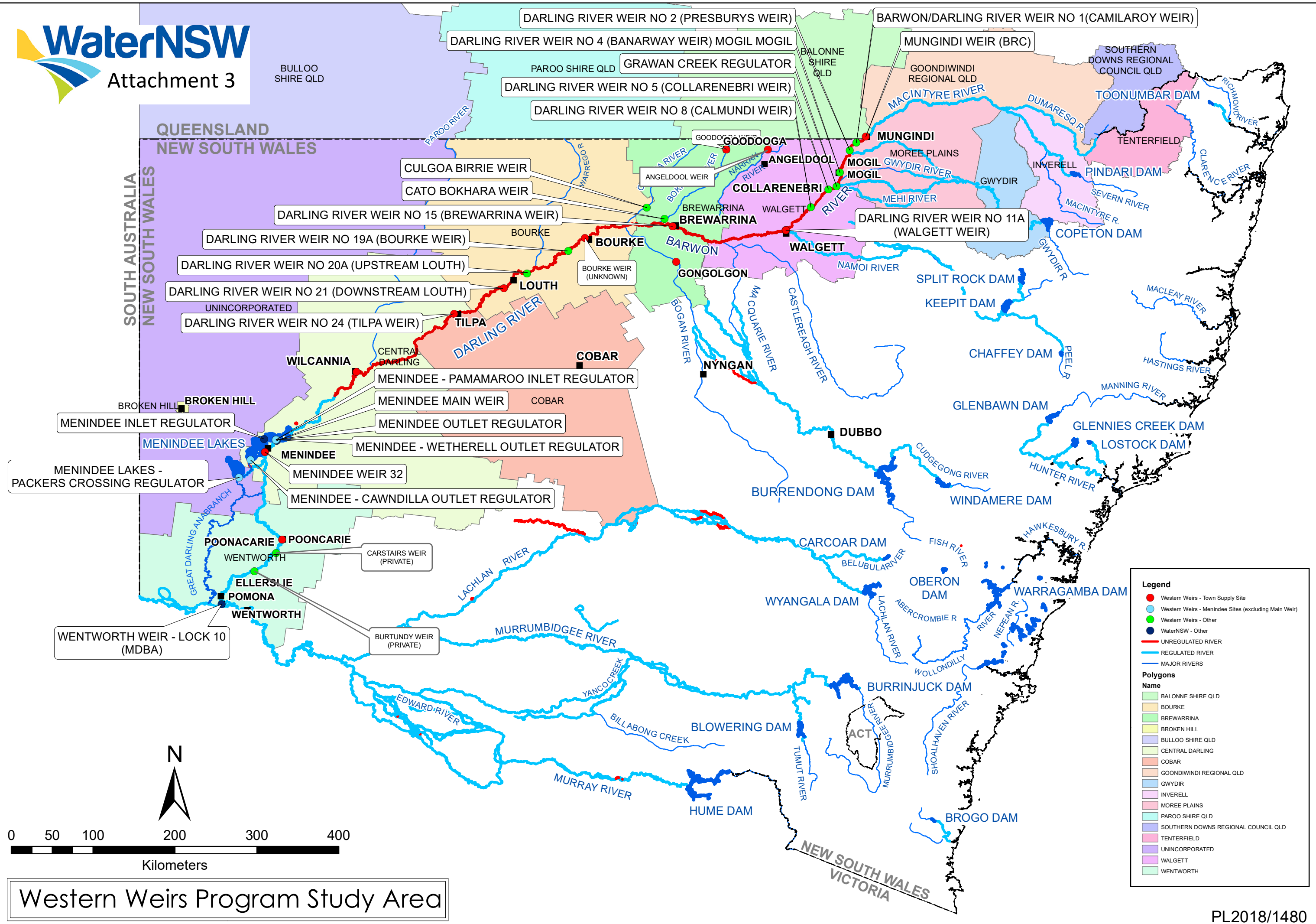
What are your region's key priorities and issues?

(250 words)

The key priorities and issues in terms of natural disasters for our region are as follows:

What are your region's commitment to 4 main actions to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

(250 words)



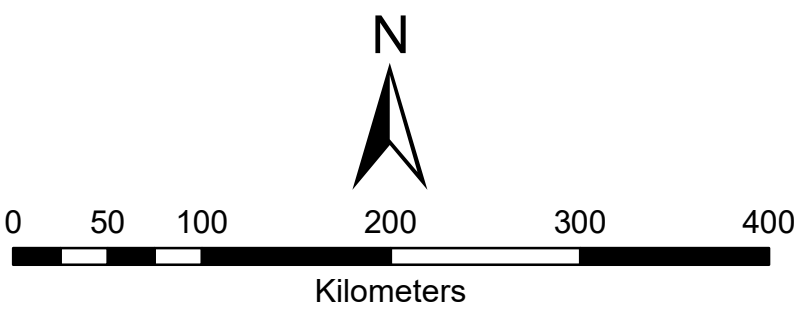
Legend

- Western Weirs - Town Supply Site
- Western Weirs - Menindee Sites (excluding Main Weir)
- Western Weirs - Other
- WaterNSW - Other
- UNREGULATED RIVER
- REGULATED RIVER
- MAJOR RIVERS

Polygons

Name

- BALONNE SHIRE QLD
- BOURKE
- BREWARRINA
- BROKEN HILL
- BULLOO SHIRE QLD
- CENTRAL DARLING
- COBAR
- GOONDIWINDI REGIONAL QLD
- GWYDIR
- INVERELL
- MOREE PLAINS
- PAROO SHIRE QLD
- SOUTHERN DOWNS REGIONAL COUNCIL QLD
- TENTERFIELD
- UNINCORPORATED
- WALGETT
- WENTWORTH



Western Weirs Program Study Area

Western Weirs

Attachment 4



Gathering local input, feedback and knowledge

Since our last project update, we've continued meeting with far west councils, weir owners and other relevant government agencies and groups. These meetings have been valuable for helping develop the Western Weirs Strategic Business Case (SBC), along with the modelling, surveying and engineering work required to assess the benefits, options and risks of the project.

Local knowledge and feedback is important, even in this early stage of the program, and we appreciate the feedback we have received to date on water security and quality, weir infrastructure and ownership, and the important social and cultural concerns of the communities in this region.

Engaging with Aboriginal stakeholders and community groups

Engagement and input from Aboriginal stakeholders and communities is a key priority for the Western Weirs Strategic Business Case and we are working to develop the best approach for engagement with the region's communities.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, engagement with Aboriginal communities and general community groups is now scheduled for early 2021. This also aligns with the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE)-Water's consultation schedule so we plan to deliver it jointly and reduce the consultation fatigue for communities.

WaterNSW is looking forward to consulting with community groups and Aboriginal stakeholders in early 2021 where we will ensure a COVID-19 safety plan will be in place to meet all NSW Health requirements.

Project snapshot

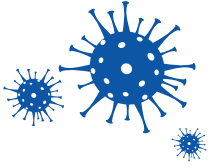
The Western Weirs program is taking a holistic approach to the management of weirs in the Barwon-Darling and Lower Darling river systems to improve water security and sustain communities and economies in the far west region.

There are many weirs along this river system and the current infrastructure is known to have a number of deficiencies. These include poor condition of weirs, no system level functionality, flow regulation limitations, town water supply and water security concerns, and unclear responsibility or maintenance of structures.

The program is currently in its initial stages: WaterNSW is developing a strategic business case (SBC) to assess the options, risks and benefits of taking such an approach.

The Western Weirs SBC is funded under the state government's Restart NSW Water Security for Regions program, which aims to help regional communities improve water security.

WaterNSW is working closely with the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) to develop the SBC. The Western Weirs program aligns with the development of DPIE's Western Regional Water Strategy and working together will ensure the SBC will also be reflected in the regional water strategy as one of the key projects for the western region. As part of this approach, we've been collaborating on all stakeholder engagement, including attending and participating in all interviews held to date.



COVID-19 and what it means for the Western Weirs project

Meeting with stakeholders face-to-face and providing equal opportunities for all to be consulted is an important part of our engagement approach. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, and to ensure communities and the project team remain safe, WNSW has been following COVID-19 government directives relating to travel, public gatherings and social distancing.

This has meant that all face-to-face engagement activities, starting from March 2020, have been re-designed and adapted where possible, to an online environment. This includes using digital platforms and phone interviews – all of the meetings with councils and weir owners have been held in this way.

In the meantime, the project team has been continuing, where possible, to progress the necessary engineering, modelling, surveying and assessment work for the SBC. These activities are also currently limited by the COVID-19 restrictions and the team's abilities to be on site and travel regionally with safe arrangements in place.

What is a strategic business case?

A strategic business case (SBC) is an initial assessment carried out at the beginning of a program to determine whether there is justification to progress to a more detailed stage, known as a final business case (FBC).

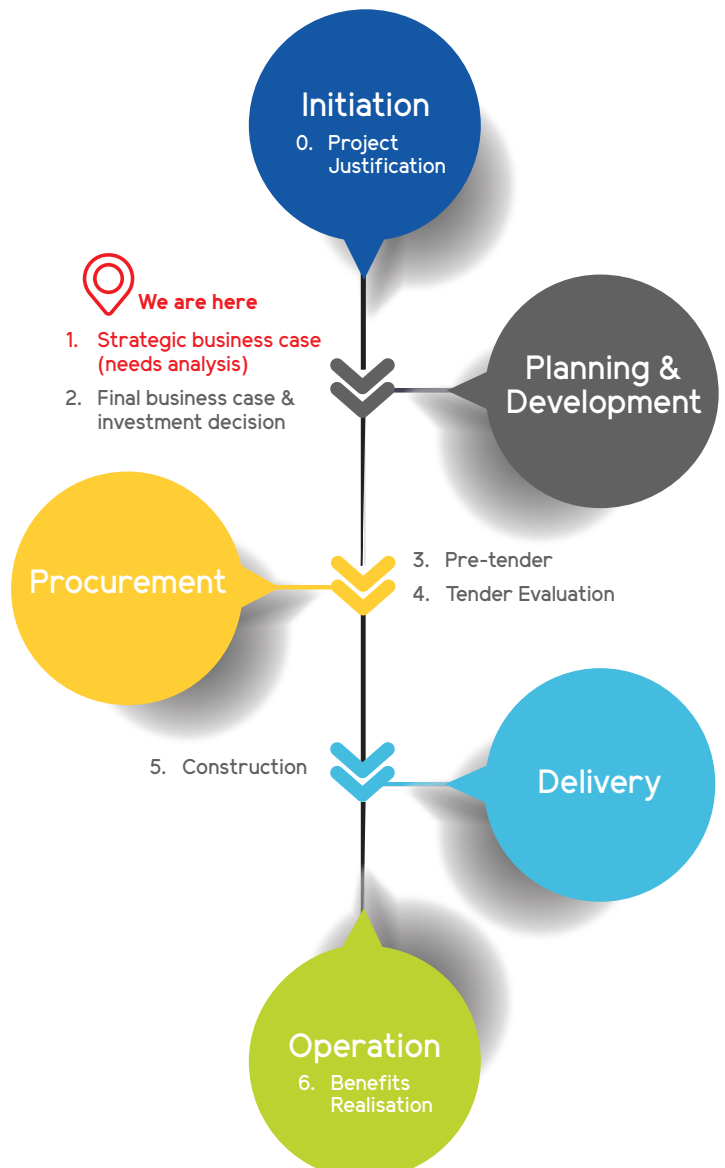
An SBC is the first phase of the Infrastructure NSW gateway review process and includes independent expert reviews.

The Western Weirs SBC will investigate both build and non-build options. For example, it may investigate new weirs or changes to existing policies.

Once completed, an SBC will provide an understanding of the options that may be developed and analysed further, via the FBC process if this is funded to progress.

The Western Weirs program is currently funded to complete the strategic business case. Funding for the final business case and beyond will be subject to government review and recommendation.

INSW Project Gateway Stages



Frequently asked questions

Which weirs are being investigated in the study?

There are currently 28 weirs that have been included in the study area under the following principles:

- Weirs are located on the main stem river of the Barwon-Darling or Lower Darling rivers in NSW between Mungindi and Wentworth.
- A weir that is on a tributary to the Barwon-Darling River and its primary purpose is potable drinking water supply for local towns, or its proximity to the Barwon-Darling River provides an opportunity to investigate improved system functionality and environmental flows.

Which weirs are being considered for possible replacement with gated structures or for other major changes?

As the strategic business case is still in the options assessment phase, it is still to be determined which of these 28 weirs, if any, will be considered for further changes.

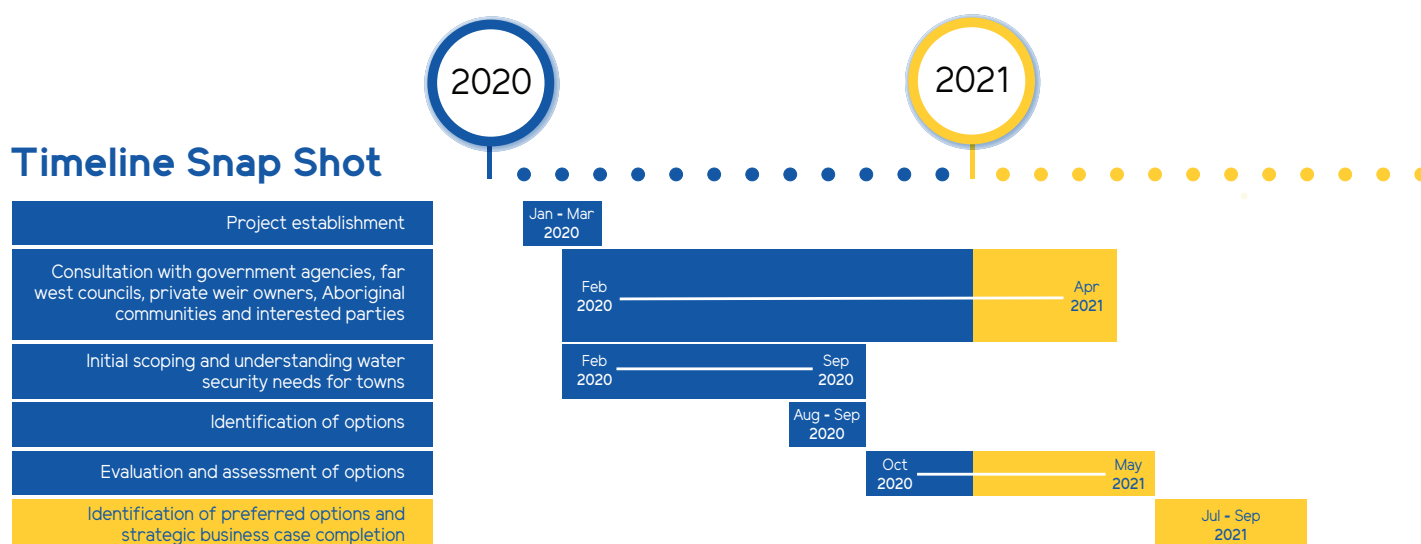
Are fishways being considered as part of this program?

Fishways are proposed for all new weirs or existing weirs that are changed as part of the project.

If you have further questions about the Western Weirs program you might find the answer in our **Frequently Asked Questions** now up on the Western Weirs webpage. Alternatively, you can contact the project team via the details at the bottom of this page.

Next steps at a glance

- Continue preparing the SBC for submission to the NSW Government.
- The timeline, as illustrated below, is subject to change due to the impacts of restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Aboriginal and community groups engagement planned for early 2021 when it is hoped that COVID-19 restrictions lift and face-to-face consultation is safe for communities and the project team.
- Continue engineering, modelling, surveying and assessment work after the lifting of restrictions.



Keep in touch

- ☎ Call us on **1300 662 077**
- @ Email Us at Customer.Helpdesk@waterNSW.com.au
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MDA Submission to the
NSW Border Rivers: Floodplain harvesting in
water sharing plans

November 2020

Emma Bradbury
ceo@mda.asn.au

Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
Border Rivers Regional Water Strategy feedback
regionalwater.strategies@dpi.nsw.gov.au

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE), Floodplain Harvesting licence rules in the water sharing plans for NSW Border Rivers.

About us

The Murray Darling Association is the peak body for local government in the Murray-Darling Basin, informing policy and contributing local knowledge and regional solutions since 1944. There are 167 councils that sit within the Basin and whose communities rely upon water from within the catchment.

The management of water is a matter that is of significant interest to local government. Local government has a direct and immediate relationship to the communities we serve; responsible for delivering core services, maintaining economic growth, resilience and community health and wellbeing.

The allocation, sustainability, availability, and affordability of water resources is recognised as a critical factor in the environmental, social, cultural, and economic health and stability of our nation as whole. This is never more applicable than across the rural and regional communities of the Murray Darling Basin.

Intro

On the 27th of November 2020, the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC)¹ made 15 recommendations to the NSW Government to improve the management of the state's water resources.

Specifically, the recommendations contained within the report concern the focus on specific interests within water agencies and deal with the:

- lengthy history of failure in giving proper and full effect to the objects, principles and duties of the Water Management Act 2000 and its priorities for water sharing
- failure to fully implement water sharing plans and ensure they are audited
- need to fund independent scientific audits to determine the ecological health of rivers
- lack of transparency, balance and fairness in consultation processes undertaken by water agencies in relation to external stakeholders

¹ [ICAC recommends changes to government water management in NSW after years of focus on irrigation industry interests](#)

- sidelining of public officials undertaking environmental roles within the NSW Government
- lack of transparency and accountability in water account information.

These issues as identified in the ICAC report directly reflect the experience and feedback of MDA councils and are supported by reports and resolutions of the Murray Darling Association over successive annual general meetings (see below).

Data and modelling

The MDA has concerns that there are significant gaps in the availability, consistency and reliability of data and information related to groundwater extraction, including the impacts on river flows.

There is a high number of uncertainties due to lack of key data including measured volume of take and measurement of return flows from floodplains to river channels, limited data on rainfall runoff, poor accuracy of river gauges. In the Murrumbidgee, for example, there is evidence of groundwater over extraction.

To understand these impacts and better manage the resource, there needs to be improved data collection and modelling to inform responsible decision making. Floodplain harvesting infrastructure must be assessed for compliance, measurement systems installed and a monitoring periods observed.

The NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) itself acknowledged the challenge in licensing rainfall runoff as it “cannot be done reliably and accurately through models as there’s an absence of published data upon which to calibrate these models. It would create significant management inequities across New South Wales.”² (Daniel Connor, Dir Healthy Floodplains Project, DPIE.)

Our councils have concerns that water is being held outside of the river channel, which, if not withheld would better contribute to connectivity, river health and recharge of groundwater. These concerns regarding lack of sufficient data and modelling and knowledge around overland flows and rainfall runoff and return flows contributing to total system function and connectivity have been raised through motions at our National Conferences.

³2018 National Conference

Motion 5.9:

That the Murray Darling Association lobby the Federal and Shadow Minister to instigate a National Water Registry, to monitor and report on all rainfall, surface and groundwater storage, evaporation and capacity or movement, including flow rate and interstate or intervalley trade, extraction, unaccounted activity, licenses and allocation in real time, and inform the public in relation to foreign ownership of water assets and infrastructure.

⁴2019 National Conference

Motion 5.17:

² [Management of rainfall runoff from irrigation areas](#)

³ [MDA 2018 National Conference](#)

⁴ [MDA 2019 National Conference](#)

That the MDA request from the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources and the MDBA a complete accounting of all water storages, including open channels, diversions and on-farm storages holding un-metered water in temporary storages, for public release.

Effects of floodplain harvesting

The Border Rivers and Barwon/ Darling River must be managed on a 'whole of catchment basis' to ensure waterway connectivity to deliver to downstream communities a healthy, reliable, and resilient water resource. No subsection of the catchment can be considered in isolation given the Border Rivers contribute heavily to flows to the Darling River.

The MDA is concerned with discrepancies in reporting on long term flow contributions from within the DPIE. In a Barwon-Darling Water Resource Plan paper in 2017⁵ the department stated that “Of the tributaries to the Barwon Darling River, the Border Rivers catchment is the largest, contributing up to 35 per cent of long term flow recorded at Menindee” where as in their Draft Regional Water Strategy, Border Rivers: Strategy⁶ they state that “ The Border Rivers region contributes 19% of the average annual flows to the Barwon-Darling River at Menindee Lakes.”

Floodwaters are an important function in the riverine landscape.

They recharge groundwater, replenish wetlands and supply downstream flows. The proposed allocation of licences in the Border Rivers & access management rules will not protect small or medium sized flows from extraction.

There should be no floodplain harvesting in first flush flow events before full connectivity is restored.

This is particularly important in dry years and the critical issue is how to turn off Floodplain Harvesting even in tributaries to ensure first flush water can get downstream to a dry/drying river. This should be a priority objective.

There should be no transferability scheme for floodplain harvesting licenses, licenses must stay with the land and not be independently tradable asset.

Communities across the MDB serves expressed deep concern over the notion that the legislated cap is currently not complied with and the proposed water sharing plan amendments seek to permit irrigators to carryover 500% of the face value of their entitlement in the first year, up to five years.

If these concerns are unfounded then the MDA would contend that communications on this complex topic must be clarified to restore community confidence.

As the development of upstream catchments has an effect on flows in the Barwon-Darling, examination of the management rules in these areas could improve outcomes for the Barwon-Darling and provide a better understanding of system-wide linkages between catchments.

It is of serious concern that provisions for contaminated rainfall runoff is insufficiently described or monitored and risks providing a loophole to facilitate unregulated take.

⁵ [Barwon-Darling Water Resource Plan](#)

⁶ [Draft Regional Water Strategy, Border Rivers: Strategy](#)

Feedback on Consultation Process

Councils across the Murray Darling Basin are currently well positioned and wanting to work collaboratively with Basin Governments, including the NSW DPIE to achieve agreed, shared and sustainable solutions to complex issues including floodplain harvesting in water sharing plans. Councils are actively committed to support process and provide content that restores and builds public confidence – at the local, the regional, the state and even the Basin scale.

Unfortunately, there are significant elements in both the process and the content of this policy that pose a risk to building that confidence.

“This is very confusing and the communication has been poor given that issues cross over the various plans and strategies. Hope the Department provides an extension on all submission dates given the time of year.

We have been dealing with finalisation of financial statements for audit, Annual report, Storm damage and Covid-19 impacts with staff in other states during lockdown. Talking to people at Menindee they are confused and just plain sub missioned out. So I understand disengagement. Frustrated and confused.”

Bob Stewart, Administrator, Central Darling Shire.

A motion at the most recent National Conference with the objective of building confidence and ensuring consistent, fair, responsible and equitable access to water resources in the Basin, calling for Basin governments to *establish and maintain consistent and equitable metering and measuring extraction across all states and regions, including flood plain harvesting, ground water extraction and river extraction*. ⁷2020 National Conference 5.7.

MDA stakeholder have highlighted the fact that the consultation process taken has been inconsistent with the department’s own commitments to consultation.

Downstream cumulative impacts need to be taken into account.

“As submissions are due by midnight 30 November, this is only six days after the proposed legislative amendments were made public and therefore flies in the face of DPIE Community Engagement Policy, so I recommend requesting an extension, to allow full digestion of this new proposed legislation and especially the cumulative downstream impacts of introducing same, so we may come up with a relevant submission, based on consideration of the relevant permutations and implications of this new information.”

Cr Jane MacAllister, Chair, MDA Region 4.

Conclusion

It is critical that Flood Plain Harvesting is fully monitored and measured before new licenses are granted. This will improve the model data.

The MDA finds the proposition that “it is proposed that a method to assess and offset any growth in this activity will be developed” a severe risk with regards to ICAC’s concern that “lack of transparency, balance and fairness in consultation processes undertaken by water agencies in relation to external stakeholders”.

⁷ [MDA 2020 National Conference](#)

While the MDA acknowledges the development of procedure and process around consultation and policy development within the DPIE there still appears to be glaring gaps which need to be addressed.

This also has been raised by ICAC⁸ as recently as the 27th of November 2020. The MDA recommends that the development of the Floodplain Harvesting licence rules in the water sharing plans for NSW Border Rivers carefully consider community input and the recommendations of the ICAC.

⁸ [ICAC recommends changes to government water management in NSW after years of focus on irrigation industry interests](#)