

# Better Baaka Program

## About the Better Baaka Program



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The NSW Government is investigating a range of initiatives for the Darling-Baaka River system as part of rescoping the Menindee Lakes project. These measures are part of a new Better Baaka program (the program).

Following the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council meeting in April, Water Infrastructure NSW has rescoped the Menindee Lakes Sustainable Diversion Limits Adjustment Mechanism (SDLAM) Project and investigated options that could be supported by the community.

Our focus over the past few months has been evaluating the years of community feedback regarding the need to improve connectivity, environmental, cultural and community outcomes.

We know these issues can only be addressed by taking a holistic, system-wide approach to water infrastructure planning and operations, working in tandem with changes in water policy and strategy. We also know that feedback from our stakeholders and communities is critical to ensuring we progress the best options for delivering outcomes.

We have recently launched a major consultation and engagement program, which will enable us to work side-by-side with communities to investigate solutions to create a Better Baaka. This is a shift towards beneficial outcomes for communities and the environment.

The options are currently being investigated by the project team, most of which are in the very early planning stage. Community feedback and input will play a crucial role in shaping which initiatives are progressed, and what these initiatives look like, to deliver a Better Baaka.

## Proposed components of the program

We are proposing a range of measures to deliver outcomes and we want to ensure the initiatives are broadly supported by our communities. Infrastructure improvements, policy settings and operating rules are all being considered to make the Darling-Baaka system more flexible, so its rivers and floodplains can be protected, and enhanced, and sustainable local communities, agriculture and industries can be supported.

The program will seek to address a range of water issues important to local communities, such as water security, reducing the frequency and length of time towns have to live with temporary water restrictions and the reconfiguration of upstream supply.

We will be engaging with communities on how to improve fish passage across 2,000 kms of the system, through initiatives under the Western Weirs Program, by considering options for weirs to improve connectivity in locations where they currently create impediments to fish passage, and through constructing or upgrading fishways at other locations and weirs as part of the Northern Basin Toolkit *Fish for the Future Strategy*.

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A key focus of the program will also be on delivering important social and economic outcomes for local First Nations communities, by enhancing tourism and education, and creating employment opportunities, while also protecting and enhancing cultural heritage.

The key components/projects include:

- Morton Bookka enhancement ([view the fact sheet](#))
- Menindee Weir modifications ([view the fact sheet](#))
- Menindee local community benefits ([view the fact sheet](#))
- Weir renewals on the Darling ([view the fact sheet](#))
- Weir modifications and assessments ([view the fact sheet](#))
- Wilcannia Weir (view the [project website](#))
- Toorale Water Infrastructure Project (view the [project website](#))
- Water for cultural and environmental outcomes ([view the fact sheet](#))
- Town Water Supply (view the [project website](#)).

## Options map

The location of the initiatives making up the Better Baaka program are shown in the map below.



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### Stakeholder engagement

Communities will be at the heart of the Better Baaka program. We are committed to working in partnership to develop the program to deliver outcomes with broad community support.

We will provide numerous opportunities for local communities and stakeholders to have their say on the design of the program and throughout the development and delivery phases of any projects. This feedback will be a key input into decision making and will help shape the program's future design.

We are also keen to hear any alternative or additional ideas local communities may have to deliver economic, cultural and environmental outcomes for local communities and the environment across the Darling-Baaka river system.

In October 2021, we will commence talking to local communities on the proposed ideas making up the Better Baaka program. Upcoming engagement and partnering opportunities will be listed on the [Better Baaka webpage](#) and also on our [stakeholder engagement page](#).

### Engagement with First Nations people

We recognise and acknowledge the unique relationship and deep connection to country that First Nations people have as the Traditional Owners and First Peoples of Australia.

The wisdom and experience of First Nations communities will play a critical role in informing the development of initiatives and approach to the Better Baaka program.

We have a dedicated engagement team who will guide our engagement with these communities, and we look forward to working with them to deliver real, tangible and widely accepted outcomes.

### Find out more

For more information on the Better Baaka program:

- call 1300 081 047
- email our engagement team at [better.baaka@dpie.nsw.gov.au](mailto:better.baaka@dpie.nsw.gov.au)
- visit [dpie.nsw.gov.au/better-baaka](https://dpie.nsw.gov.au/better-baaka)

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