

Reconnecting River Country

Working with First Nations communities

Rivers and wetlands are of great cultural, social, environmental, spiritual, and economic importance to Aboriginal people. This connection provides valuable insights into the management and maintenance of our waterways, riverscapes, and the land.

The NSW Government is committed to ensuring water-dependent cultural values and uses important to Aboriginal communities are embedded into the NSW [Reconnecting River Country Program](#) (the program).

Addressing constraints will support the continuity of cultural practices, knowledge, and values due to the improved health and restoration of the environment.

Program benefits for First Nations communities

The program has the potential to deliver a range of outcomes that may benefit Aboriginal people. The program proposes to:

	Prioritise the connection between healthy Country and a healthy, vibrant, and sustainable Aboriginal culture and community.
	Contribute to the ability for cultural practices, knowledge, and values to be practiced in continuity due to the presence, health, and restoration of the environment.
	Connect with bordering Nations to achieve shared outcomes.
	Facilitate cross cultural communication and knowledge transfer between cultural knowledge holders and others.
	Identify, invest in, and implement strategies to successfully achieve Aboriginal Participation in Construction (APIC) commitments for the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.
	Recognise the value and expertise of Aboriginal participation by ensuring remuneration is provided when specialist expertise is engaged.
	Identify procurement opportunities where Aboriginal organisations can take part as a supplier.

Consulting First Nations communities

We will consult with Aboriginal people across the project areas using a Nation-by-Nation approach.

Consultation will include face-to-face talks and on Country workshops. This enables Aboriginal people to continue their roles as custodians and contribute to water management decisions within the context of their cultural boundaries.

The NSW Government will also work with key Aboriginal stakeholders, such as the Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, Local Aboriginal Lands Councils and Native Title groups to ensure they are consulted and included.

A vision for healthy Country

We will work with Aboriginal people to define the values and assets that benefit or are impacted by inundation within the project areas. Aboriginal people will be able to provide information on their aims and outcomes for the management of their water dependent cultural values and uses.

Following desktop assessments of the project areas, on Country assessments will be carried out. Part of the culturally appropriate consultation framework acknowledges the rights Aboriginal people have over their own knowledge.

The information gathered during the consultation process that is identified by Aboriginal people can only be used with permission.

Further information on community engagement will be available on the [Reconnecting River Country Program](#) website.

Covid-19 safety

The safety of our communities is our number one priority as we work with stakeholders to implement the Reconnecting River Country Program.

We will provide a range of opportunities to engage with the program including online, over the phone and on-site visits in line with any COVID-19 restrictions.

Each engagement opportunity will be assessed, and safety precautions implemented, as per NSW Health requirements.

Digital engagement techniques will be guided by cultural protocols to ensure their use is appropriate.

Acknowledgement

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and Local Land Services acknowledge we stand on Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and we show our respect for Elders past, present and emerging through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically.

Find out more

Website dpie.nsw.gov.au/reconnecting-river-country-program

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Australian Government
**Department of Agriculture,
Water and the Environment**