

# Improving Floodplain Connections Program

---

In Stage 2A of the Healthy Floodplains Project we are improving connectivity and floodplain health in the northern Murray–Darling Basin through the Improving Floodplain Connections program.

---

## About the program

Through the Improving Floodplain Connections program, the NSW Government is taking action in the northern Murray–Darling Basin to help bring priority unapproved flood works into compliance with the rules of the relevant floodplain management plan (FMP). This work is supported by the Australian Government as Stage 2A of the Healthy Floodplains Project.

Floodplain management plans establish rules to ensure structures (flood works) on the floodplain are managed to protect life and property, and ensure that the passage of flood water supports healthy ecosystems and cultural assets.

A flood work approval is required to construct a work on the floodplain. Flood work approvals ensure that the construction or use of a flood work does not negatively affect the flow of floodwater and cause social, economic, environmental, and cultural impacts. Examples of flood works include levees, roads, dams, channels, and block banks.

---

## The NSW Government is working together

NSW Government agencies are working together to accelerate compliance. Under business-as-usual conditions, it would take about 15 years to reach the results that this program aims to achieve in 2.5 years.

The program is led by the Water Group in the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, in collaboration with the Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR), WaterNSW, Crown Lands, the Biodiversity, Conservation and Science Group, Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Fisheries, and DPI Agriculture.

---

## What is a priority unapproved work?

Prioritisation is central to the program. Priority unapproved flood works are unapproved works that have been identified as likely to produce the most benefit for floodplain connectivity if brought into compliance.

An unapproved flood work is one that:

- does not have a valid flood work approval under the *Water Management Act 2000* or a relevant licence under the *Water Act 1912*, or
- did not need an approval at the time of construction but now needs an approval under a FMP, or
- has a flood work approval but is non-compliant with the approval.

The prioritisation process involved assessing unapproved flood work areas by hydraulic, ecological, and cultural impact.

---

## How do priority unapproved flood works become compliant?

Priority unapproved works can become compliant through the granting of a flood work approval. Some flood works may require modification before a flood work approval can be granted. Other works may need to be removed to become compliant.

Where a flood work can become compliant through an approval, the Water Group will support landholders to prepare a flood work approval application, including the assessment of impacts, and draft and final functional designs for remediation options. Approval application fees will be waived for submissions to WaterNSW and Crown Lands. Landholders will be responsible for construction activities and funding any removal or remediation work. NRAR and WaterNSW will monitor and assess the remediation of works and grant flood work approvals where statutory requirements are met. Remediating unapproved flood works will not lead to approval for a floodplain harvesting licence.

---

## How long will the program take?

The program commenced in January 2022 and was originally scheduled to conclude in June 2024. It has since been extended into 2025. At the close of the program, NRAR will continue to monitor and regulate unapproved works and WaterNSW will continue to assess applications for a flood work approval as part of their routine activities.

Figure 1. Improved Floodplain Connections Program timeframe

