

Independent Facilitator Update – August 2021

Yanco Creek Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment (SDLAM) Program

On 11 August 2021, the Yanco Stakeholder Advisory Group (YSAG) met at Morundah for meeting #12 to consider the latest updates about the [Yanco projects](#). A number of the YSAG and the project team including those affected by lockdowns joined by video link.

The SAG welcomed Brad Hollis (A/Director Southern Projects, Water Infrastructure NSW) to speak about the [NSW SDLAM Acceleration Program](#). The Yanco Creek Modernisation Project is one of five NSW SDLAM Projects that have been packaged together as part of the \$330 million acceleration program to deliver an estimated 45GL in water savings. The program was agreed in principle by the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council in April 2021, and the acceleration program arrangements are designed to simplify and help deliver the final projects, subject to statutory approvals, by 30 June 2024. Brad outlined that the Yanco Modernisation project is the largest of the five projects and will provide significant benefits to the Yanco Creek system.

YSAG were provided with a project update on the Yanco Creek Modernisation Project by Matt Kendall (Project Manager, Yanco Creek Modernisation) and Nicola Bailey (Project Coordinator, 3Rivers Partnership – GHD). The Yanco Creek Modernisation Project focus is on the investigations and approvals associated with the preferred option that has been endorsed by YSAG and presented at the community drop in sessions in February 2021:

- Part 1 Environmental Water Efficiency to improve efficiency of water delivery to environmental assets
- Part 2 Billabong Creek Re Regulation Weirs to reduce operational surplus (four sub projects)
- Part 3 Yanco / Mundooro Anabranch Reconfiguration to re-regulate flows
- Part 4 Forest Creek Return Flows to reduce unplanned surplus at Warriston weir
- Part 5 Improved Flow Measurement to provide river operators with improved information
- Part 6 Murray Irrigation and Coleambally Irrigation Escapes to optimise use of irrigation escapes
- Part 7 Improved Use of Technology to consider how technology can be used to improve the operational efficiency of the Yanco Creek System
- Part 8 Improved Riparian Management complementary measures consistent with project objectives

The update covered progress and activities carried out over the last month and planned for the next month, which includes due diligence by the Commonwealth on the project, and the technical basis of design workshops for each of the project parts.

This has helped identify aspects of project infrastructure which is numerous and almost too long to mention but includes 4 new Re-regulation weirs, 3+ Environmental asset works, 7+ additional hydrographic stations, and improved fish passage works such as weir removal. YSAG emphasised the importance of ongoing consultation with landholders and the community as the project moves forward including through focus groups.

The project will also be considering non-infrastructure aspects such as Landholder easements and agreements, improved Base Flow targets, and system operational rules amendments consistent with the project objectives. Preliminary modelling results indicate that there appears to be genuine investment opportunities and benefits for the Yanco Creek System and are consistent with the project objectives of smarter use of water, and keeping the Yanco/Billabong/Colombo and Forest Creeks Flowing.

Lisa Chikarovski (Director Strategic Community and Stakeholder Engagement) spoke about the [rescope](#) of the Yanco Offtake Project which the SAG has recommended be renamed the Yanco Creek Connection Project. Lisa outlined that the timeframe and process for consultation on the rescope project will be provided to YSAG shortly.

YSAG expressed their view that it is disappointing that Water Infrastructure NSW is still not able to release the further details about the rescope. Importantly though; we know that:

- Minister Pavey has said that SDLAM projects will require community support to proceed.
- The YSAG has advised that:
 - It does not support:
 - a new regulator being constructed in the Yanco Offtake Cutting; or
 - raising of the existing weir pool upstream of the existing Yanco Fixed Crest Weir and Yanco Weir/Regulator by 2.5m.
 - It does support further investigating:
 - the need to legislate new baseline flow targets throughout the Yanco Creek System on a reach by reach basis;
 - the option of replacing the existing Murrumbidgee River Yanco fixed crest weir with a new gated regulated either at the same height or a small to modest increase to the current full supply level;
 - options other than a new regulator in the Yanco Offtake Cutting that can help better control high flows into the Yanco Offtake Cutting during large managed (human controlled) environmental water management events; and
 - considering options for additional local benefits in the Yanco and Murrumbidgee especially for connectivity and fish passage.

The meeting reviewed draft materials that have been developed in preparation for a series of seven community drop in sessions (including two First Nations sessions) from 6 to 9 September. There is a strong preference for local communities to be able to meet face to face if possible however it is recognised that COVID-19 restrictions may require these sessions to be moved to an online format. The YSAG provided a number of recommendations regarding how the draft material can be improved. The YSAG requested that it be provided with an opportunity to review draft materials about the rescope of the Yanco Offtake Project in advance of these community drop in sessions.

Donna Kennedy (Manager First Nations Engagement) and Maydina Penrith (Senior Aboriginal Cultural Officer) spoke about recent and upcoming First Nation engagement activities. This included discussion about plans for formal advertising in local papers for Registration of interested Aboriginal Parties regarding the Yanco Creek Modernisation Project and the release of Water Infrastructure NSW's [Draft Strategy for Delivering Aboriginal Community Outcomes](#) for consultation.

Moana Prescott (Community and Stakeholder Engagement Officer) provided a demonstration of the [Yanco Creek Modernisation Project Social Pinpoint page](#). This site includes useful information, maps and videos about the eight parts of the Yanco Creek Modernisation Project currently being investigated. It also includes a useful list of upcoming events to keep people informed about key events and activities.

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