

Department of Planning and Environment –
Water Group

Improving Floodplain Connections Program

Tranche 1 – Border Rivers, Gwydir, Barwon-
Darling

Webinar

Presenters

Dan Connor

Monika Muschal

Rob Albert

Shannon Cobley

Tim Morrison

1 June 2023

Acknowledgement of Country



Agenda – Improving Floodplain Connections



Introductions and Agenda	Steve Rossiter
1. Purpose of today	Steve Rossiter
2. IFC Program Overview	Dan Connor
I. Fairness, equity and transparency (probity)	Monika Muschal
II. Progress so far	Rob Albert
III. NRAR field visits and compliance	Shannon Cobley (NRAR)
IV. Modelling	Tim Morrison
3. Next steps and wrap up	Steve Rossiter

1. Purpose of today

- Provide more information on the program and its progress as requested in conversations with stakeholders
- Communicate with key stakeholders about program implementation and benefits
- Explain the various roles of different agencies in the implementation of the IFC
- Ask for your feedback on the approach to consultation in the Border Rivers, Gwydir and Barwon-Darling valleys
- Answer questions in relation to the program

Improving Floodplain Connections

Program Overview

Dan Connor, Director of Floodplain Management
Department of Planning and Environment - Water Group



Improving Floodplain Connections (IFC)

Will bring priority unapproved flood works into compliance with recent legislative requirements, including removal or modification where required

Improved floodplain connections

- An accelerated compliance program for identified priority flood works
- To be completed by June 2024
- Commonwealth and NSW funding
- Multi-agency program

Agency Partnership

- Natural Resources Access Regulator
- WaterNSW
- Department of Planning and Environment: Water, Environment and Heritage, Crown Lands
- Regional NSW, Department of Primary Industries – Fisheries and Agriculture



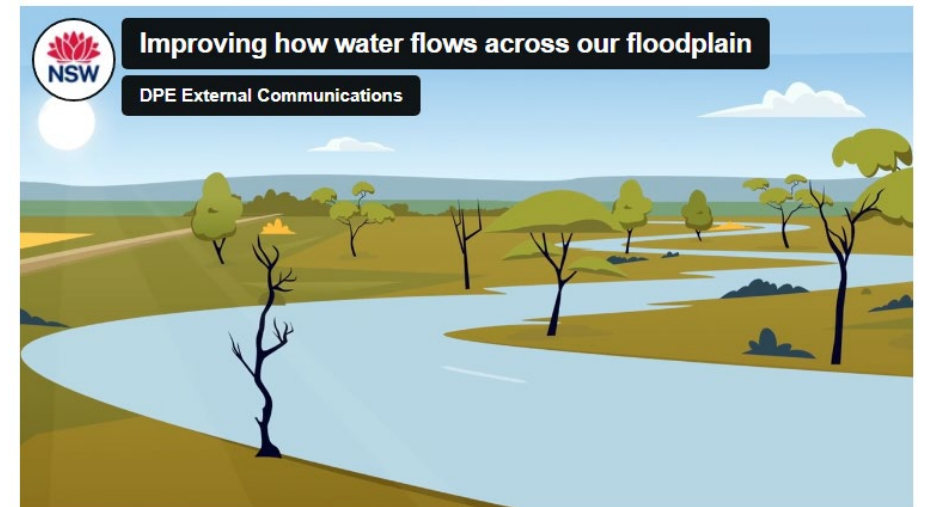
Purpose & benefits

Purpose

- Assist the passage of water across the floodplain, while supporting landscape productivity and averting flood risk
- Bring the licensing of existing flood works into alignment with the current legislation and regulatory framework

Benefits

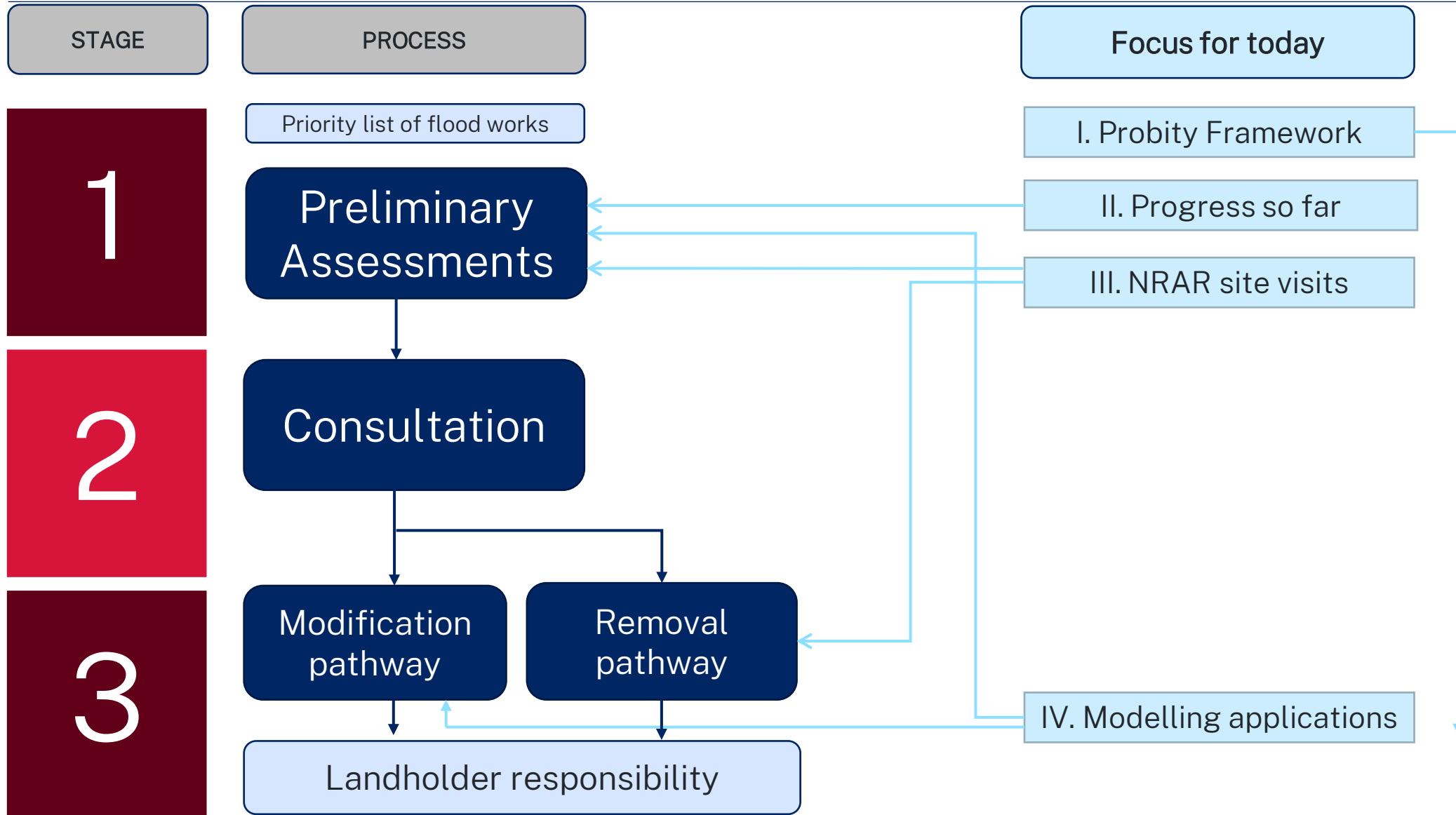
- Improved compliance culture with flood works
- Provide water for the natural environment
- Protect cultural assets



See our Website: www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/plans-programs/healthy-floodplains-project/improving-floodplain-connections

Overall Process

Focus for today



Support for modification pathway

Support for landholders to accelerate outcomes

- Plan of works
- Modelling, environmental and cultural assessments
- Application fees will be waived

Key principles

- Participation is voluntary
- Will require active and timely participation and cooperation by landholder
- Modification must meet legislative requirements

Landholders/flood works not eligible for modification pathway will be referred to NRAR for further action

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Fairness, equity, transparency

Monika Muschal, Principal Project Officer
Department of Planning and Environment - Water Group



Probity Framework

What are we doing to ensure ethical behaviour?

- Managing conflict of interest (actual, perceived, potential)
- Confidentiality and information security
- Record-keeping requirements
- Process for dealing with probity issues or complaints
- Probity plans and protocols
- Communications and engagement
- Independent Probity Advisor



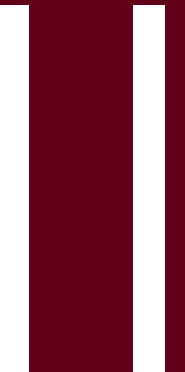
Questions about probity?

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Progress so far

Rob Albert, Principal Water Regulation Officer
Department of Planning and Environment - Water Group

Descriptor



Site selection – initial identification

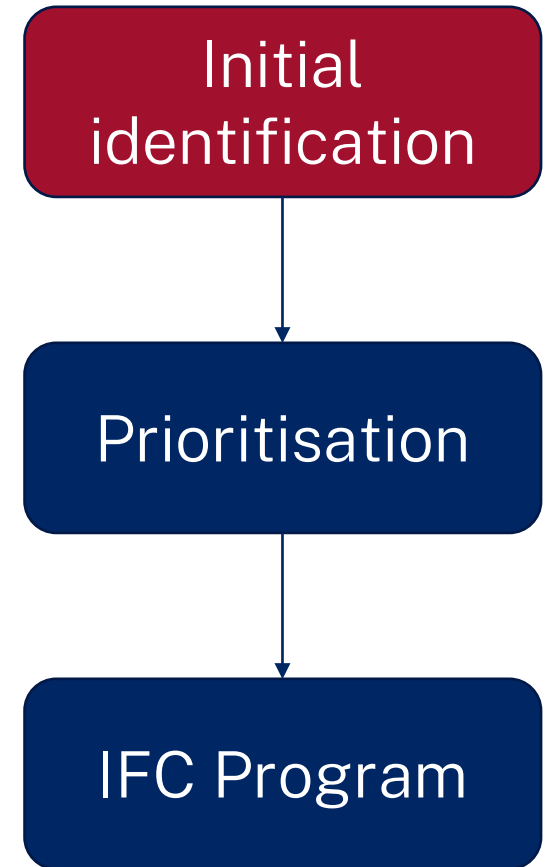
All work types and licence status

Data from a range of sources including:

- Floodplain management plans
- Review of existing floodplain models and studies
- Referrals from environmental-water managers
- Stakeholder engagement for the development of FMPs

Outcome ~500 geographic locations (“Hotspots”)

- NOTE – a Hotspot is an area of interest and may contain numerous work types (not just flood works) and states of approval (approved/unapproved)



Site selection - prioritisation

1. Spatial analysis to determine likely scale of impact, e.g.

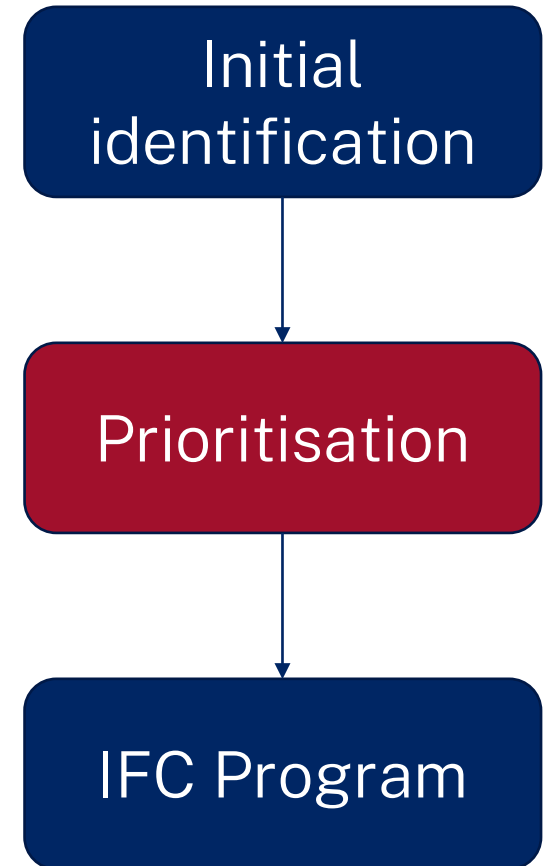
- Size (height) of structure and how much changes flow on the floodway
- Cultural assets that require water to maintain e.g. scar trees
- Ecological assets dependent on flooding e.g. semi-permanent wetlands
- Important fish habitats

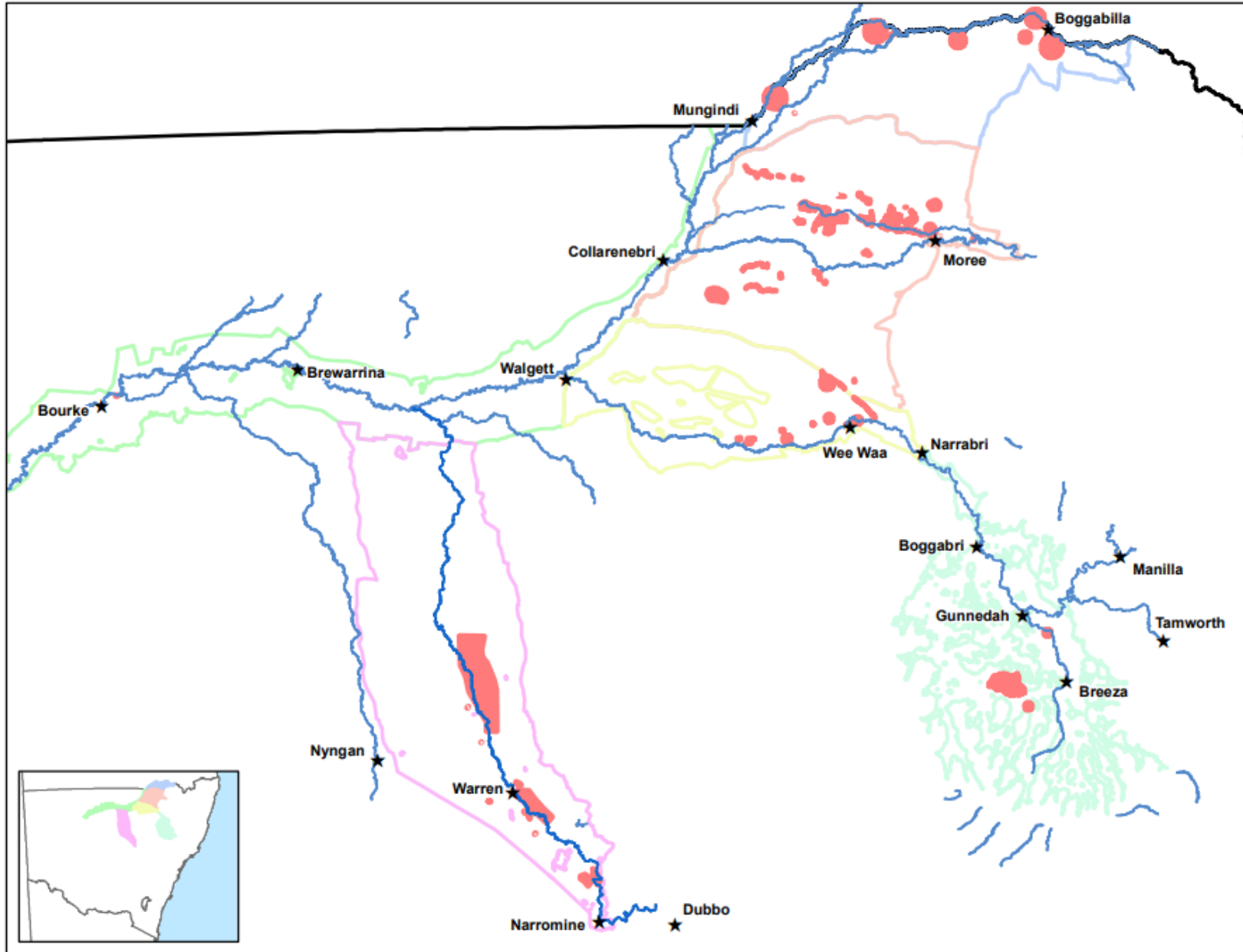
2. Weighting of 'Hotspots'

- Multi-criteria approach
- Greatest return on public investment

3. Priority ~110 'Hotspots'

- Focus on areas of interest that have unapproved flood works with the most significant impact on the floodplain, especially with ecological and cultural assets.





- Legend**
- ★ Towns
 - Priority Unapproved Works
 - Major Watercourse
 - Barwon-Darling Valley Floodplain
 - Border Rivers Valley Floodplain
 - Gwydir Valley Floodplain
 - Lower Namoi Valley Floodplain
 - Macquarie Valley Floodplain
 - Upper Namoi Valley Floodplain
 - NSW State Border



Scale: 1:2,400,000
(at A4 size)

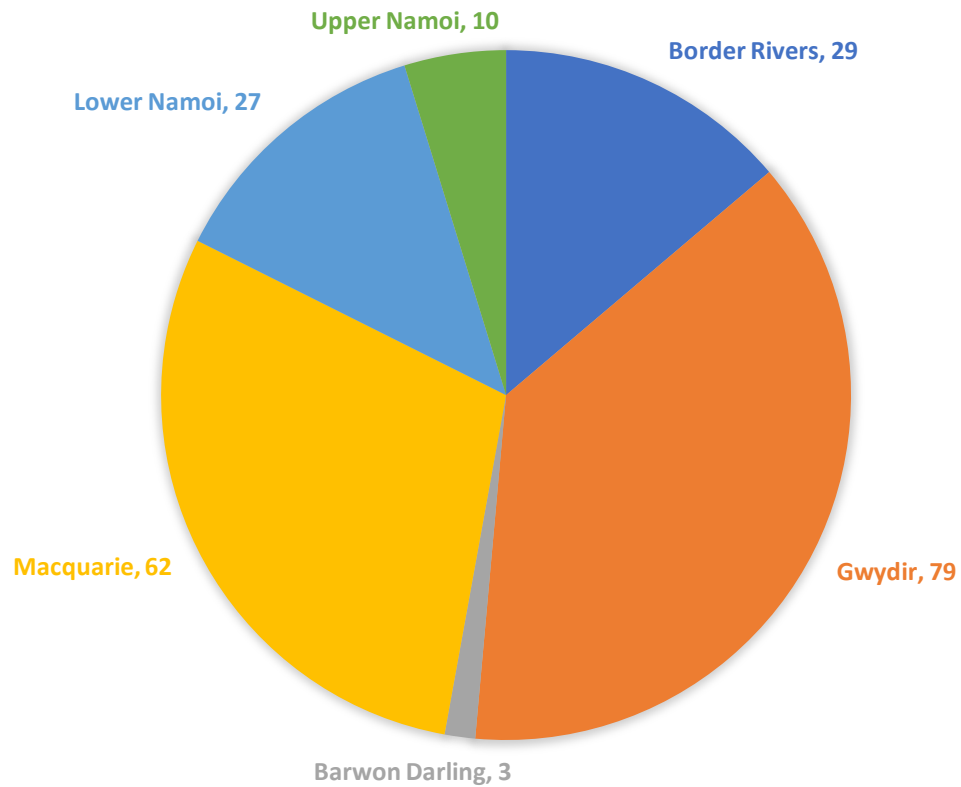
Projection: NSW Lamberts Conformal Conic
Datum: GDA94

Roads, rivers, towns data source:
© Spatial Services – NSW Department of Customer Services 202.
Panorama Avenue, Bathurst 2795
spatialservices.finance.nsw.gov.au

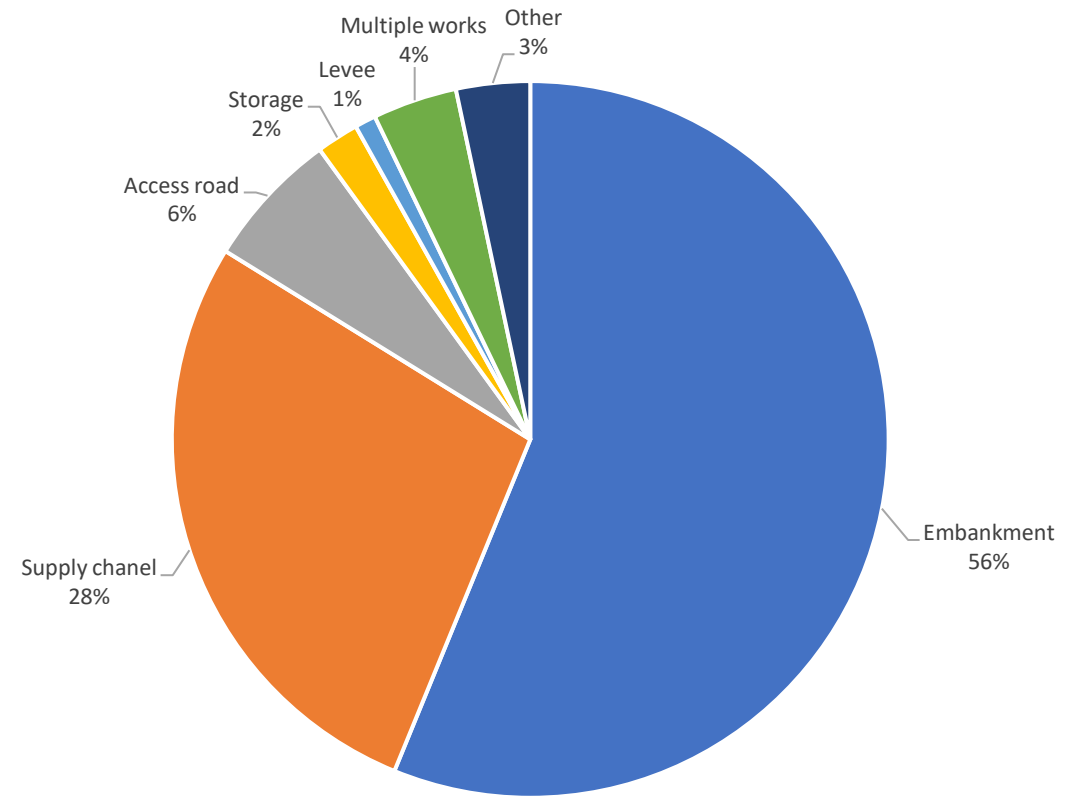
0 50 100 150 200 250 km

Flood works and types in the program

NUMBER OF FLOOD WORKS – BY VALLEY

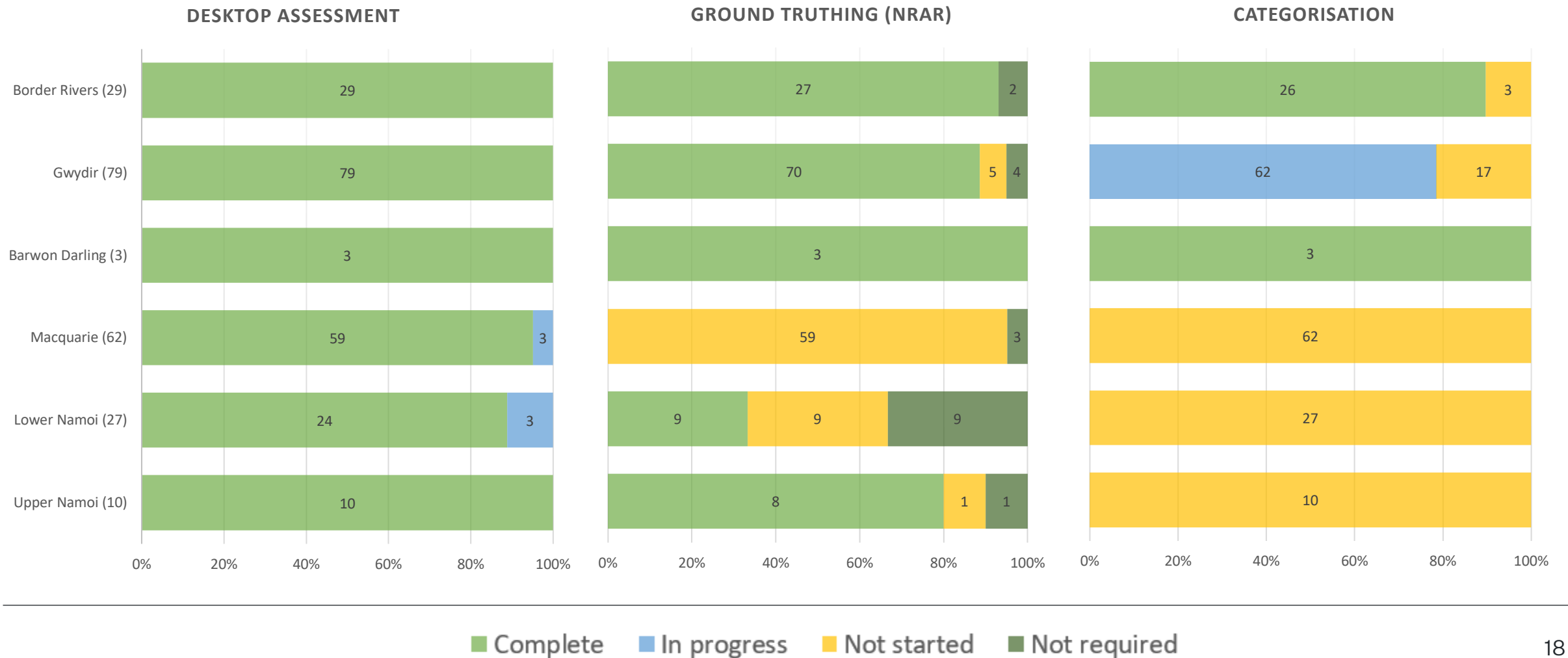


FLOOD WORK TYPE - ALL VALLEYS



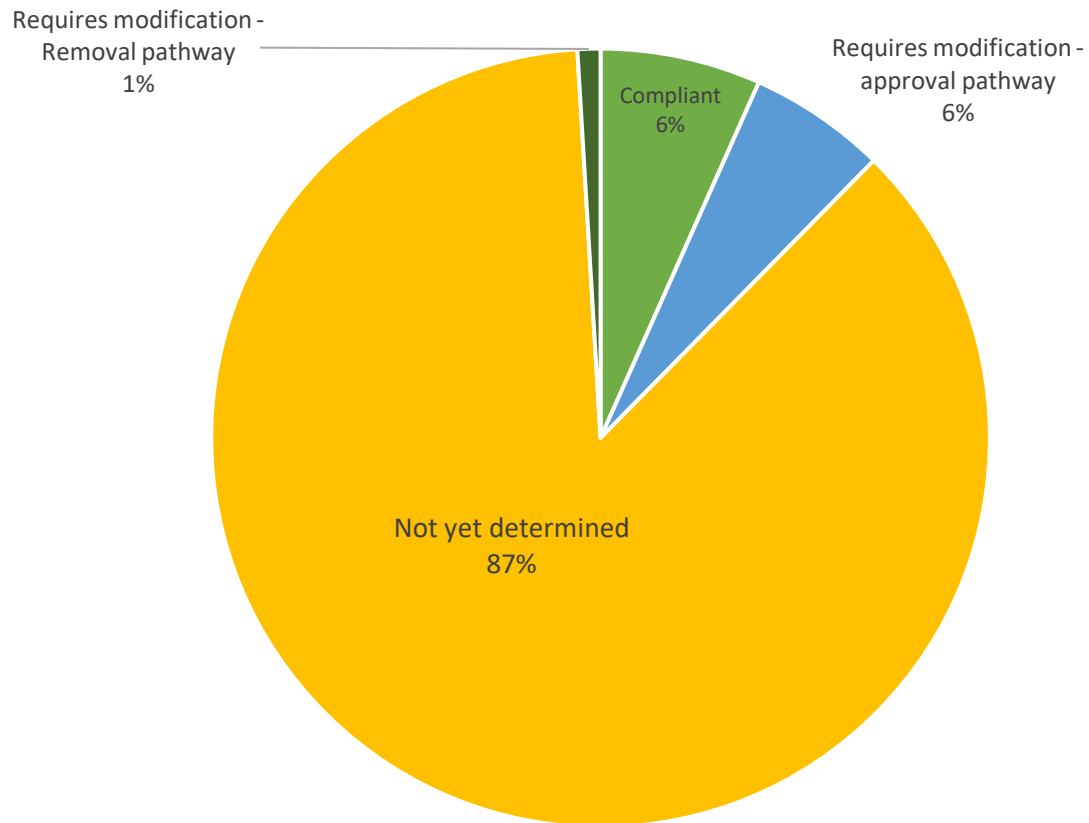
Progress so far (Stage 1)

Preliminary Assessment

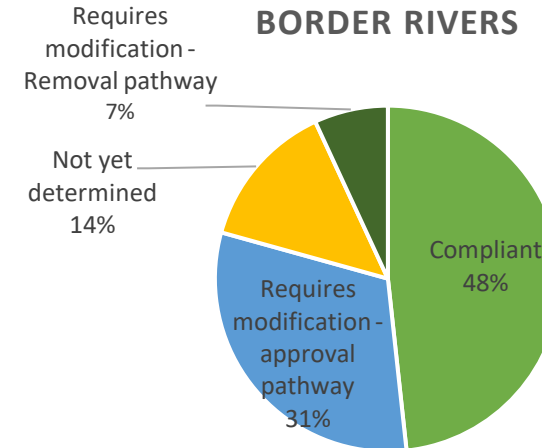


Categorisation decisions so far (Stage 1)

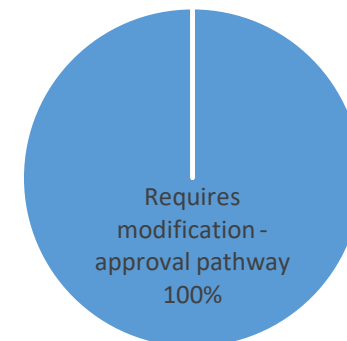
CATEGORISATION PATHWAY - ALL VALLEYS



BORDER RIVERS



BARWON DARLING

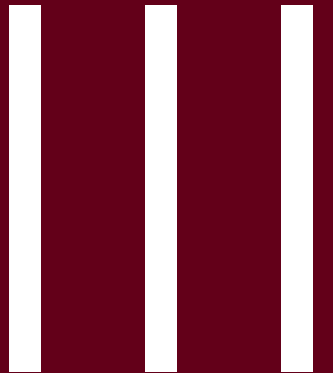


Questions about progress so far?

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NRAR site visits

Shannon Cobley, Team Leader Compliance Programs
Natural Resources Access Regulator



NRAR's role

NRAR has two key roles in the IFC program:

1. To **gather information** on the ground to assist partner agencies to make decisions
2. To **monitor compliance** with any action – like removal or remediation - you need to take to make sure your structure is compliant.

Where works we inspect are found to be non-compliant, we will work with you to get it into compliance.

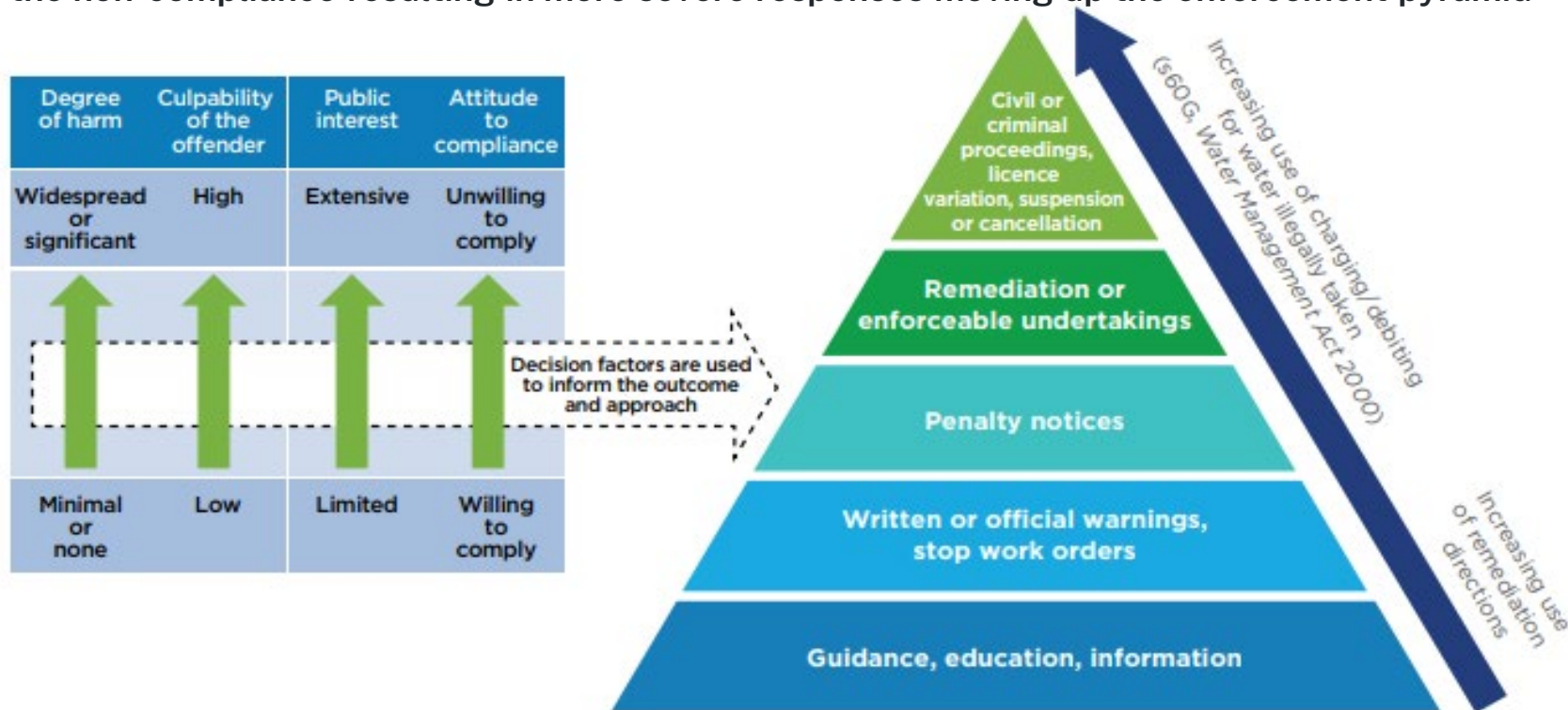
Inspections of priority works

- Before NRAR officers arrive at your property, they will call you and follow up with an email, an introductory letter, fact sheet and map of the structure they intend to inspect.
- During an inspection, the officers may collect photos, measurements and drone footage to help inform the most suitable pathway for resolution.



Potential regulatory responses

The factors that guide our decision-making are considered in combination to identify what action we will take. The greater the impact to any or all factors, the more severe the response and enforcement action will be. Our approach is depicted below, with the increasing impact of the non-compliance resulting in more severe responses moving up the enforcement pyramid



Questions about NRAR site visits?

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Assessment

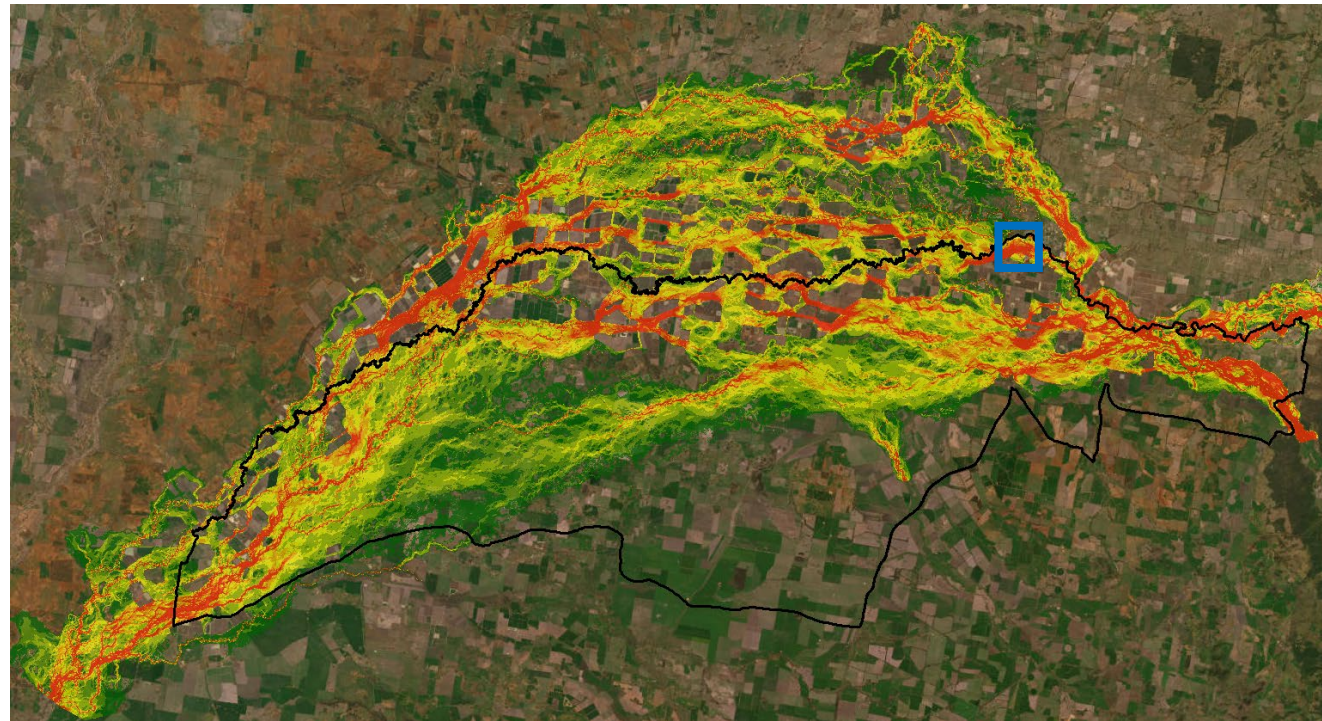
Tim Morrison, Manager Floodplain Assessments
Department of Planning and Environment - Water Group

IV

Hydraulic Modelling

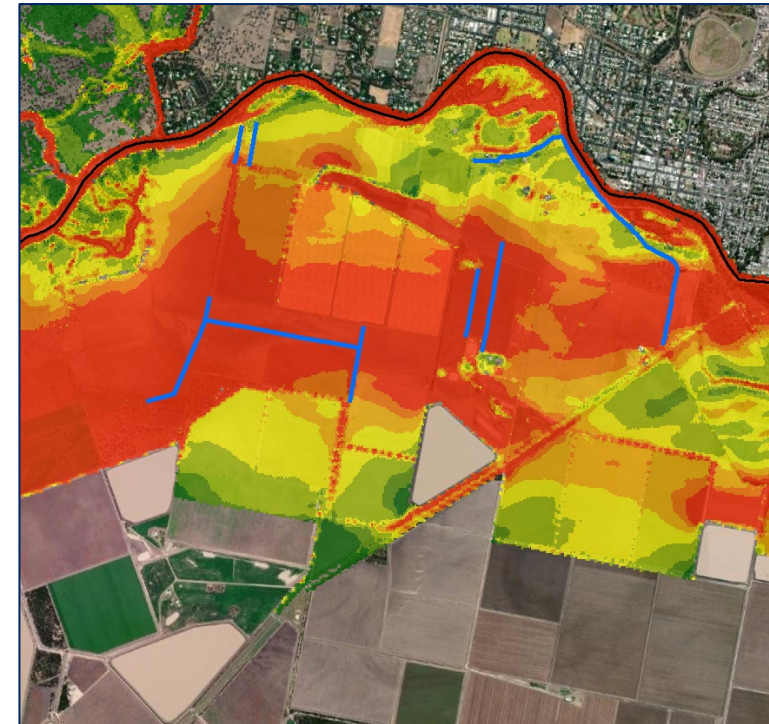
Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

- Determine overall project benefits



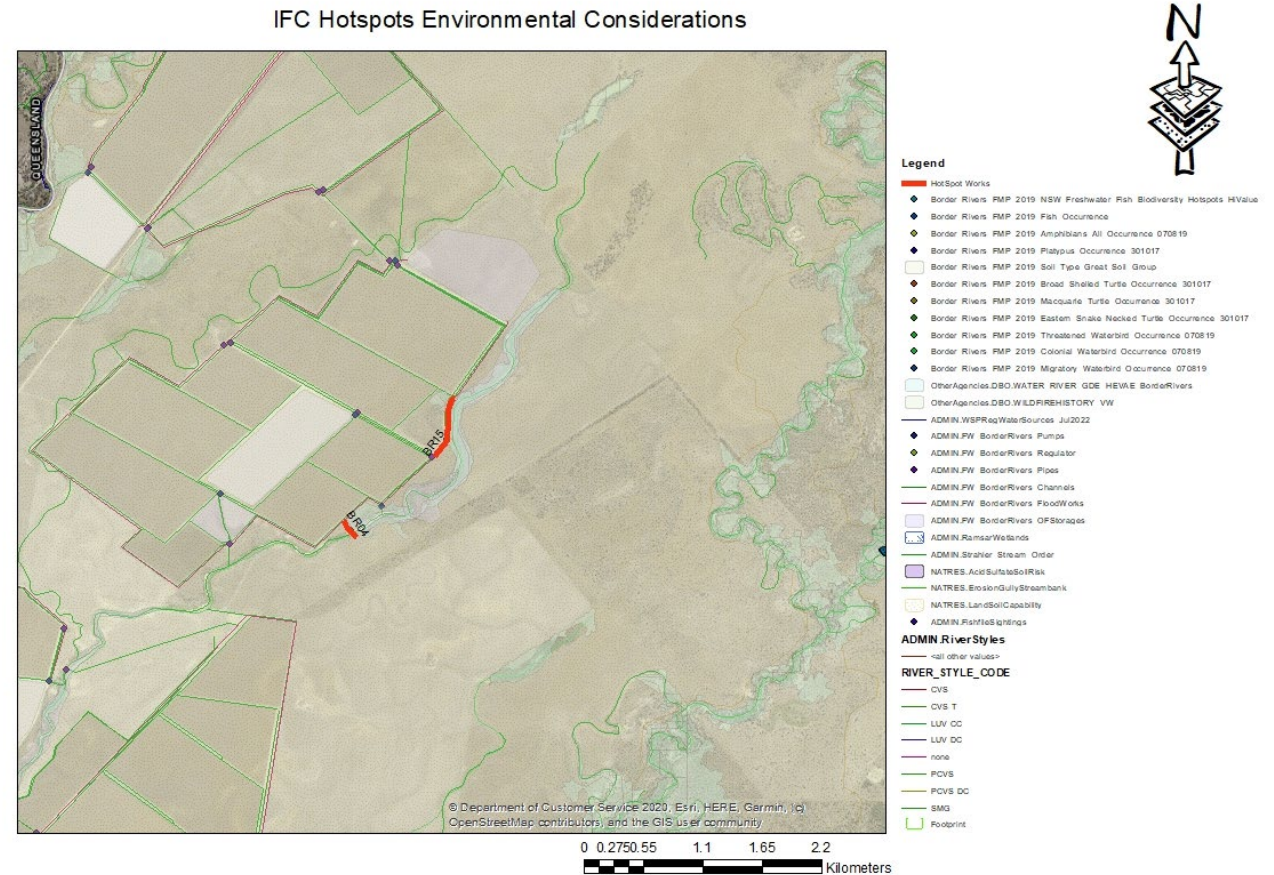
Impact Assessment

- Determine impacts of individual works on third parties

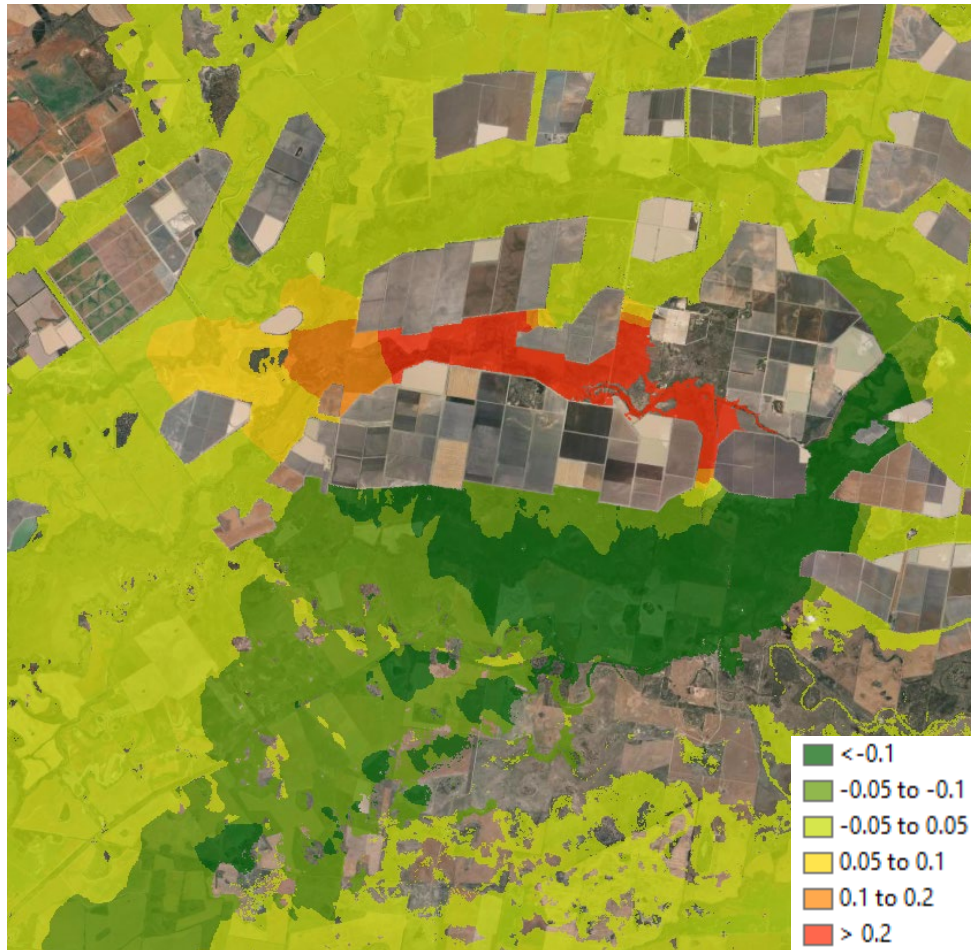


Ecological and Cultural Assessment

- Ecological and cultural assessment undertaken at key stages
- Consult with relevant partner agencies
- Conduct additional studies if required
- Documents to support application



MER Progress to date - Border Rivers Regional Assessment



Modelled Event	Flood Dependent Vegetation Inundation (Ha)	Average Change in Flow Distribution (%)*
1976 Large Design Flood	+400	0.9
2013 Small Design Flood	+ 80	0.6

Questions about assessment?

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Next Steps

Steve Rossiter, Facilitator
ATX Consulting



Timeframes

	2022		2023		2024	
	Jan - Jun	Jul - Dec	Jan - Jun	Jul - Dec	Jan - Jun	Jul - Dec
Stage 1 - Preliminary assessments						
Border Rivers (pilot)						
Gwydir, Barwon-Darling						
Macquarie, Namoi						
Stage 2 - Commence consultation						
Border Rivers (pilot)						
Gwydir, Barwon-Darling						
Macquarie, Namoi						
Stage 3 - Remediation / compliance						
Border Rivers (pilot)						
Gwydir, Barwon-Darling						
Macquarie, Namoi						

WaterNSW will be assessing applications that proceed down the approval pathway and assisting the project team with advice on existing approvals

Consultation

Affected landholders – direct engagement with DPE and WaterNSW staff

Key stakeholders – to provide information and increase awareness

First Nations – to be undertaken by an Indigenous engagement specialist

Feedback?

More information

Water Group

Web:

<https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/plans-programs/healthy-floodplains-project/improving-floodplain-connections>

Email: floodplain.ifcdelivery@dpie.nsw.gov.au

NRAR

Email: nrar.ifc@nrar.nsw.gov.au

Healthy Floodplains Project



About the project

Reforming floodplain water management in the NSW northern Basin to ensure a fair share for all users and the environment...



Licensing framework for floodplain harvesting

A comprehensive licensing framework means limits on water take can be measured, managed and enforced.



Improving floodplain connections

An accelerated compliance program for priority unapproved flood works in the northern Murray-Darling Basin.



Water Sharing Plans

Setting out the rules for how flood water is allocated to users and the protection of the environment.