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\$14.3 million Yass to Murrumbateman water pipeline complete



The construction of a 17.9 kilometre water pipeline in Murrumbateman and Yass is now complete. The reservoir is full of water from the Yass Water Treatment Plant after successful commissioning of the pipeline, pump station and reservoir this month.

The pipeline will service up to 3,000 people in the village and improve the water quality in the area. The area is currently serviced through a water supply system, which uses water drawn from groundwater sources and, although it undergoes a disinfection treatment process, it can still be below average quality.

The substantial investment, jointly funded by the Australian and NSW Governments and Yass Valley Council, has been developed to improve water quality in the area and ensure water supply copes with demand, especially during summer.

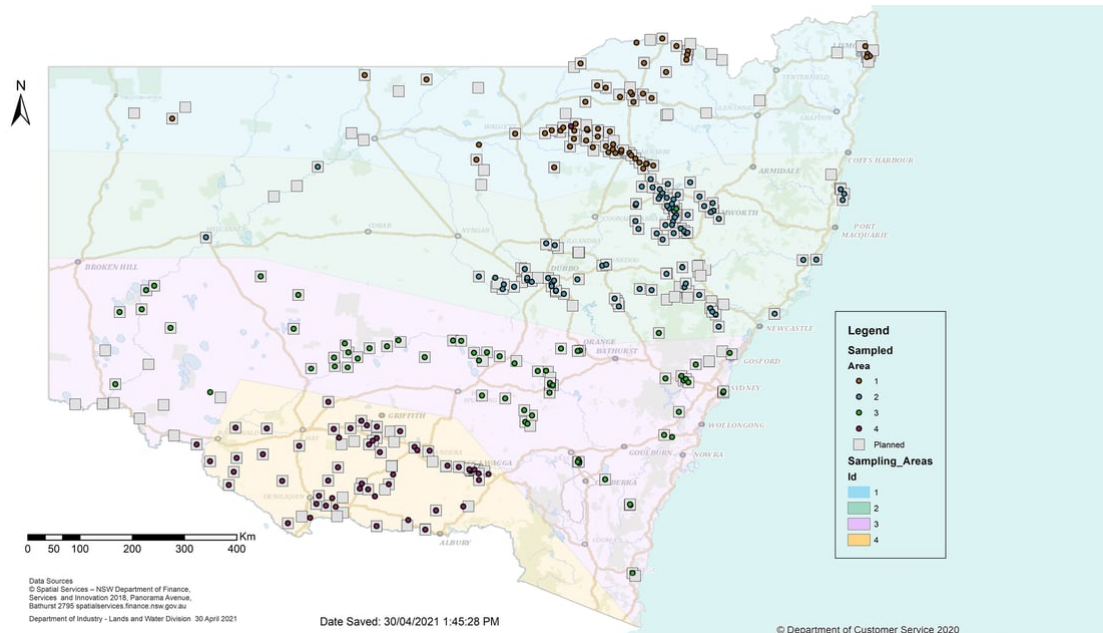
The NSW Minister for Water, Property and Housing, Melinda Pavey MP, joined Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development, Michael McCormack MP, Senator Perin Davey and local member for Goulburn, Wendy Tuckerman MP, at the official opening on 14 May.

The NSW Government provided \$3.9 million towards the project through the

Restart NSW program.

Learn more about the [new pipeline](#).

Statewide sampling and analysis of groundwater



The department is working on an ambitious program to collect and analyse water quality samples from across the whole state. The results will create a baseline data set that helps us to better understand aquifer character and recharge across the state, and support good decision making with current, good quality data.

The field work program ran for four months in early 2021. It collected over 800 samples from 593 bores at 275 locations and analysed samples for 40 parameters. The age of the water will be assessed using radiocarbon or tritium analysis, which will provide an indication of how quickly the aquifers are being recharged or replenished.

The large task was made more difficult by widespread flooding in May, which interrupted works for up to three weeks. Our teams encountered mouse and locust plagues, extreme temperatures, heavy rainfall and COVID-19 closures, but completed the program safely and without incident.

This work would not be possible without partnerships with WaterNSW and laboratory service ALS.

Learn more [about groundwater](#) on our website.

Releases from Menindee Lakes to meet downstream targets

Because of drier conditions than expected in the southern catchments, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) has announced that it will begin small releases from Menindee Lakes to meet required volume targets in Lake Victoria. These targets,

set in the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement, need to be met by the end of May each year.

Under the Agreement, when the storage volume of Menindee Lakes reaches 640 gigalitres, or 37 per cent capacity, the lakes change from NSW control to MDBA control, and the water in the lakes is available to meet shared demands downstream for NSW, Victoria and South Australia.

Read more on the MDBA website.

Local government water management conference



We are proud to sponsor the Local Government NSW Water Management Conference in Narrabri on 7-9 July. The conference is a major annual forum to discuss water policy initiatives and trends relevant to local government. The focus of the conference this year is Building Resilience and Capability.

The conference aims to help practitioners and elected members learn about ways in which they can build on the excellent work underway in the water industry and look at new ways to address the inevitable challenges of a changing climate in the future.

Jim Bentley, Deputy Secretary Water, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment will give a keynote presentation, reflecting on the department's partnership with councils and local water utilities through the Town Water Risk Reduction Program. This is a strong collaborative approach to identifying long-term solutions to the challenges and risks to providing water supply and sewerage services in regional towns.

Attendees will also hear about the latest technical issues and share best practice in urban water governance and management.

You can [register for the conference here](#).

Upgrades to Jubullum water treatment plant improve water quality



The department's Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program (ACWSP) has been collaborating with Clarence Valley Council and their contractors to upgrade the water supply infrastructure in Jubullum to ensure the community receives healthy drinking water. Jubullum Aboriginal community is located approximately 60km west of Casino in NSW.

A drinking water management review in 2019 identified several issues with the existing system. The upgrade addresses these issues with:

- a second reservoir to double the storage capacity of the water supply system,
- an ultrafiltration plant to filter the solids from the water including bacteria, and
- a granulated activated carbon filter to help remove blue-green algae toxins and unpleasant tasting organic materials from the river water.

The community now has a cleaner and safer drinking water supply.

Read more about the [Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program](#).

Caring for Water Is Caring for Country

Five Basin Plan projects to be fast-tracked and delivered by June 2024



Five key projects under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan's Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism (SDLAM) will be accelerated and delivered by June 2024, under an agreement made at the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council meeting in April. The Australian Government agreed to fast-track funding to support the NSW proposal to accelerate the five SDLAM projects. This will bring forward an estimated \$320 million in SDLAM works to deliver up to 45 gigalitres in water savings by 2024.

The Acceleration Program includes the following projects:

- Sustainable Diversion Limit offsets in the Lower Murray: Locks 8 & 9 Project
- Yanco Creek Modernisation Project
- Murrumbidgee & Murray National Park Project
- Koondrook-Perricoota Flow Enabling Works
- Mid-Murray Anabranches Constraints Demonstration Reach.

As a result, an estimated 75 percent of the Basin Plan's 605 gigalitre water-saving target under this program will be delivered by 30 June 2024. This will deliver socio-economic, cultural and environmental benefits for communities.

[Learn more](#) about the five projects and the Acceleration Program.

Drought update

While some communities are still suffering the lingering effects of drought, NSW is now considered to be thankfully drought free.

Rainfall over the last few months has resulted in good inflows into the major rural storages, and as of late May, almost all are above 30 per cent, with most above 50 per cent full. One exception is Split Rock Dam, at 29.3 per cent full. The overall total rural storage for the state is above 60 per cent.

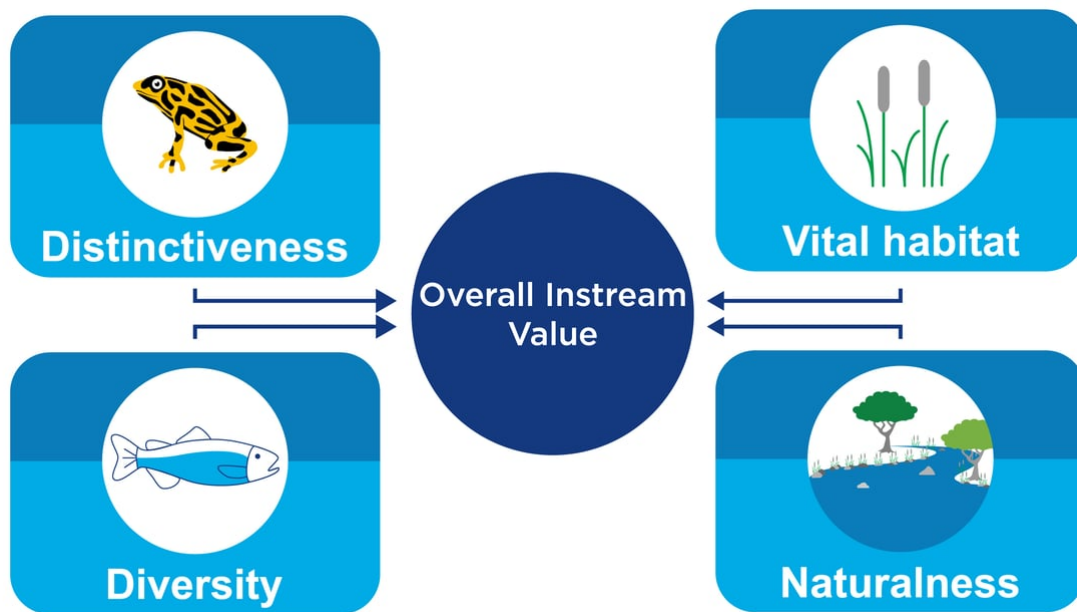
All town water, domestic and stock, and high security licences have received full allocations for 2020/21 and it is expected that they will again receive full allocations on 1 July 2021. Most valleys have received a general security allocation this water

year, typically 50 per cent or more, except for the Belubula Valley. However, general security licence holders in the Belubula have access to uncontrolled flows.

Around 1,000 gigalitres of water has reached the Menindee Lakes since the end of March. Menindee Lakes is at 59 per cent full, but inflows are starting to recede.

Read more about drought and managing recovery, or sign up to receive the WaterNSW Regional Water availability report.

HEVAE tool pinpoints high ecological values in NSW rivers



Have you seen our tool for assessing high ecological value? Launched late last year, the high ecological value aquatic ecosystem (HEVAE) tool brings together data on the distinctiveness, diversity, vital habitat, and naturalness of river systems.

The new tool uses an interactive map format to more accurately pinpoint areas of high ecological value. This means it can be used to help protect these areas, and also to assess potential risks to them.

Learn more and access the [HEVAE mapping tool](#).

Menindee Lakes and Yanco Creek Offtake Projects to be rescoped



The Menindee Lakes and Yanco Creek Offtake Projects have caused a high level of concern in their respective communities. Recognising these projects have unique sensitivities and cannot be delivered in their current form by 2024, we are rescoping them.

Over the next few months, the department will look at whether there are alternative projects which could be completed, instead of what was previously proposed.

The department will carry out investigations and technical studies to rescope the projects and will work with communities to deliver projects with broad community support.

[Learn more](#) about the rescoping of these projects.

New Independent Metropolitan Water Advisory Panel

The department welcomes the appointment of a new Independent Metropolitan Water Advisory Panel to support the drafting and delivery of two metropolitan water strategies. Minister Pavey has appointed Professor Robert Skinner AM, Dr Peter Davies, Professor Ana Deletic, Dr Stuart Khan and Dr Susan Petterson to the panel.

The Panel's Chair is Professor Robert Skinner AM. He is currently a Professorial Fellow at Monash University's Sustainable Development Institute, and Deputy Chair of both the Cooperative Research Centre for Water Sensitive Cities and Yarra Valley Water.

The Panel will advise on matters including the science and evidence base for the development and implementation of the strategies, to ensure best practice. Panel members will use their expertise to strengthen our water planning processes, emphasising up to date knowledge and practices. The Panel will serve a two-year term.

For more information see Sydney Metropolitan Water and Lower Hunter Water Security Plan.

Free bore surveys for Great Artesian Basin landowners



As part of the Improving Great Artesian Basin Drought Resilience (IGABDR) program, eligible landowners in the Great Artesian Basin can receive a free bore survey.

The bore surveys will assess water pressure, flow and quality as well as the integrity of the bore infrastructure to inform future funding for infrastructure improvement and water efficiency activities. Participants will receive a comprehensive report on the status of their bore.

All landowners with bores on their property in the Great Artesian Basin in NSW are encouraged to contact the department to be assessed for eligibility. The information collected will remain strictly confidential.

For more information [visit our website](#), [email us](#) or call us on 1300 081 047.

Managing groundwater extraction to extraction limits: What we heard

Between November 2020 and March 2021, we sought feedback from stakeholders on how we should manage access to groundwater if total extractions exceed extraction limits set in groundwater sharing plans.

We thank everyone who participated for their valuable input. We received over 80 written submissions as well as feedback from seven face-to-face information sessions held across NSW during February 2021.

We have published a full report summarising what we heard. The next steps are:

- On 1 July 2021: in groundwater sources where groundwater extraction limits are exceeded in 2020–21 and extraction needs to return to the limit, we will reduce available water determinations for the 2021–22 water year.
- By 1 July 2022: we will consult further before preparing and publishing the method the department will use to manage extraction limits in inland groundwater sources from 1 July 2022 onwards. The method that applies may differ between groundwater sources.

Read the full report on our website.

NRAR assessing compliance with new metering regulations



The Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) is continuing to assess compliance with the new non-urban water metering framework. The first tranche of the framework applies to water users with >500mm pumps and came into effect on 1 December 2020.

NRAR's [initial desktop analysis](#) found low levels of compliance among affected water users. Since then, NRAR officers have been calling stakeholders directly and visiting properties to provide advice and check compliance.

NRAR is focusing on ensuring water users understand that they **must** have their water take measured by tamper-proof, accurate meters and **should** have had these validated by a certified professional.

Information to help licenced water users understand what they need to do [to comply with the non-urban water metering framework](#) is on the department's website

Whilst NRAR acknowledge there may be some barriers to being fully compliant, water users must be able to demonstrate they have done everything within their power to comply.

Read more about [NRAR's compliance approach](#).

NRAR commences 3 prosecutions

NRAR has commenced two prosecutions in the Land and Environment Court and another in the Tenterfield Local Court.

A Moree irrigation company faces 43 charges for allegedly taking water while metering equipment was not operating properly, constructing an unlawful dam, using the dam without an approval, and for taking water which was not authorised by a licence or approval. The maximum penalties for these offences range from \$1,000,100 and \$2,000,200.

NRAR has also charged two Griffith water users for allegedly taking water in excess of their licences and approvals. Both individuals face a maximum fine of up to \$500,500 for each offence.

In the case before the Tenterfield Local Court, NRAR alleges an earthmoving company constructed an unlawful bore and a landholder unlawfully took water through the bore. The company faces penalties up to \$2,000,200 for each offence and the landholder faces a penalty of up to \$500,500 for each offence.

[Read more here.](#)

NRAR visits more than 2,000 properties in six months



Officers from the NRAR's routine monitoring program clocked up enough kilometres (87,000) to travel around the globe twice between 1 October 2020 and 31 March 2021.

Gregory Abood, Director of Regional Water Regulation (East), said he was pleased with the progress his officers made and is encouraged that most water users either comply or show intent to comply with the law.

“Our experience out in the field has confirmed our belief that most water users want to do the right thing. Issues arise when they don't know the rules,” Mr Abood said.

The data from the program will inform NRAR's future monitoring, auditing and compliance programs to ensure the regulator is being efficient, proactive and productive where it matters.

Read the [media release](#) here.

Have your say

Current and upcoming consultations and information events:

19 April - 31 May

[Webinar and online survey to inform the NSW Government response to the ACCC Murray–Darling Basin water market inquiry final report](#)

4 June – 18 June

Aboriginal and community engagement, Far West NSW, including consultation on the draft Western Regional Water Strategy, Western Weirs project and the Water Infrastructure NSW portfolio. All sessions 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

- [4 June - Mungindi](#)
- [8 June - Walgett](#)
- [9 June - Brewarrina](#)
- [10 June - Bourke](#)
- [16 June - Wilcannia](#)
- [17 June - Menindee](#)
- [18 June, Wentworth \(Dareton\)](#)

[View all](#)

Latest water news from the department

- [Groundwater dashboard delivers key advice to water users](#)
- [NRAR routine monitoring staff travelled twice the distance of the globe and found the most troublesome compliance issue](#)
- [Inter-Valley Trade with the Lower Darling is now open](#)
- [NRAR prosecutes two Griffith water users for alleged unlawful water take](#)
- [NRAR prosecutes earthmoving company for alleged water law breaches](#)
- [NRAR commences largest prosecution against a Moree irrigator](#)
- [Five projects set to accelerate Basin Plan](#)
- [Floodplain Harvesting regulations 'What We Heard' reports released](#)

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Water News is our monthly update on water planning, management and reform in NSW. If you have any questions or feedback contact us at:

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