

January 2023 | ISSUE #44

## Communicating with our stakeholders in the lead up to the NSW election in March

In the weeks leading up to the NSW election there are special arrangements in place to ensure the neutrality of the public service.

From 26 January until the end of the formal caretaker period, our primary source of communications will be via our website. Our regular electronic newsletters will cease during this period. Keeping our communities and stakeholders informed is very important to us.

Please look out for emails you may receive from us and check our website regularly for updates.

For any enquiries you can contact us by email: [water.enquiries@dpie.nsw.gov.au](mailto:water.enquiries@dpie.nsw.gov.au) or call 1300 081 047 during business hours.

## Cultural Watering Plans Project



The Department of Planning and Environment is currently piloting a Cultural Watering Plans project across NSW. This project asks Aboriginal communities to register their interest to develop a Cultural Watering Plan for their region and applications are now open.

A Cultural Watering Plan will outline how Aboriginal communities want to use their water rights to achieve cultural outcomes using water management language.

Developing a plan will:

- inform the department's review of existing policy frameworks to identify opportunities for greater Aboriginal access and ownership of water
- provide information to Aboriginal communities to make it easier to navigate the licensing framework to access and use water for cultural purposes.

Submissions close at 11.59 pm Sunday 26 February 2023.

For more information, please visit [Cultural Watering Plans](#).

## Reconnecting River Country Program reference group - Expressions of Interest now open



Want to help shape the future of local rivers and wetlands across southern NSW?

The department is seeking applications from landholders and First Nations people who are interested in joining a [Reconnecting River Country Program](#) reference group.

The Reconnecting River Country Program aims to achieve a balance of economic, social, cultural and environmental outcomes across southern NSW by improving wetland and floodplain connectivity in the Murray and Murrumbidgee River systems.

The reference groups will support transparent, equitable and consistent engagement about the program with a broad range of potentially affected landholders and First Nations communities.

Reference group members will:

- represent the views and interests of the program's most affected stakeholders
- represent the views and interests of their declared stakeholder networks
- provide feedback and advice on key elements of the program
- road test selected program information and communication products with their declared stakeholder networks
- share approved program information with their declared stakeholder networks.

Reference group members will be required to meet with the program team at least twice in 2023 to consider key program components and identify issues and opportunities.

Applications close on Friday 10 February 2023 at 5 pm (AEDT).

You can learn more about the program's reference groups and how to apply on our [website](#).

You can also call 1300 081 047 or email [reference-groups.rrcp@dpie.nsw.gov.au](mailto:reference-groups.rrcp@dpie.nsw.gov.au)

## NSW River Condition Index



*Image credit: Mel Bradbury*

The department has completed an update of the NSW River Condition Index 2012, and the 2023 version is now available at [NSW River Condition Index](#).

The River Condition Index creates a score for overall river health using existing data sets. Data relating to water quality, the condition of the physical landscape, biodiversity and more is combined to assess the overall river health.

The scores are created using the Framework for the Assessment of River and Wetland Health, which is the accepted method throughout Australia.

Final scores can be compared across NSW and beyond for a relative understanding of the condition of the state's rivers. As a primary tool for long-term reporting on river health, the River Condition Index guides strategic river management and rehabilitation and will be a valuable resource for stakeholders.

More information can be found at the [River Condition Index page](#) on the department's website.

## Telemetry rebate supporting non-urban metering rollout

WaterNSW's telemetry rebate program supports water users to install telemetry-enabled meters across NSW. The program provides water users a \$975 rebate on their water bill - as a credit each year until the total rebate amount is reached - for each local intelligence device installed and connected to the NSW government's data acquisition service.

Water users who install a meter in accordance with the NSW non-urban metering and floodplain harvesting measurement rules are eligible under the \$18 million telemetry rebate program funded by the NSW and Commonwealth Governments.

Over 1,200 water users have received the rebate. Water users who have already connected to telemetry are also eligible for the rebate, which can be backdated.

Read WaterNSW's telemetry fact sheet for more information.

## New e-tool to connect water users with metering equipment installers and suppliers



The department is developing a Metering and Measurement Virtual Marketplace - a web-based tool to help water users connect with suppliers and installers of non-urban metering and floodplain harvesting measurement equipment.

Water users will be able to search the Virtual Marketplace for services and suppliers of metering equipment in their local area, or any area in NSW. Water users can also

choose to share their profile information so that equipment suppliers and installers can search for water users, who may be seeking their services.

Developing this tool is another step to better support water users to become compliant with the non-urban metering and floodplain harvesting measurement rules. The continued rollout of these reforms across NSW provides a greater ability to ensure water take remains within licensed limits.

You will be able to access the Virtual Marketplace on our [website](#) soon.

## Extension of non-urban water metering compliance dates for Southern Inland and Coastal NSW water users



Water users in the NSW Southern Inland and Coastal regions have been given extra time to install non-urban metering equipment due to recent rainfall and widespread flooding.

The new compliance dates are:

- 1 June 2023 for Southern Inland (extended by 6 months).
- 1 December 2024 for Coastal NSW (extended by 12 months).

Despite the extension, if you can install approved metering equipment ahead of the new deadlines, you should do so. If you are replacing old or damaged metering equipment, you must ensure your new meters comply with non-urban metering rules regardless of your compliance date.

We remind water users affected by flooding that, if your meter is moved due to flooding and is still operating, it must be revalidated by a duly qualified person when it is reinstalled.

If your meter has been moved or damaged due to flooding, and no longer operates properly, you must submit a [s91i self-reporting form](#) to WaterNSW within 24 hours of realising the metering is no longer operating properly.

For more information visit our [website](#).

## Have your say on Namoi Valley floodplain harvesting rules



*Image credit: Destination NSW*

Water users have extra time to learn more and have their say about draft floodplain harvesting from unregulated water sources in the Namoi Valley.

Proposed floodplain harvesting rules for both [regulated and unregulated river](#) water sources in the Namoi Valley are on public exhibition. Submissions about the regulated river water sources close at 11.59 pm, 29 January 2023.

In response to community feedback, the department has extended the public consultation on rules for floodplain harvesting in the Namoi Valley unregulated river water sources until 11.59 pm, 28 February 2023.

An information session will be held at the Gunnedah Services and Bowling Club on 7 February. This session will provide a clear overview of the proposed rules, differences for floodplain harvesting in unregulated versus regulated river water sources, and floodplain harvesting measurement requirements.

[Find more information and register to attend.](#)

[Make a submission about floodplain harvesting rules in the Namoi Valley.](#)

## Yanco Creek Modernisation Project - Billabong Creek scoping report available



The Yanco Creek Modernisation Project is investigating the improvement of infrastructure to enable smarter use of water in the Yanco Creek System.

As part of the project, Water Infrastructure NSW is proposing to replace 4 existing weirs along Billabong Creek, at Hartwood, Piccaninny, Wanganella and Caroonboon, with new, modern regulators.

The proposed new weirs will be fully automated and able to be operated remotely. This will make it easier for river operators to deliver water efficiently, as well as improve fish passage through the system.

The proposal is considered State Significant Infrastructure and the department has now received environmental assessment requirements, accompanied by a scoping report. The report and assessment requirements are now available on [the NSW Government Major Projects website](#).

Please note, community feedback is not being sought at this time. If the proposal proceeds to an Environmental Impact Statement, there will be a formal public exhibition period where community members will be able to make submissions and provide feedback.

The Yanco Creek Modernisation Project is funded by the Australian Government.

If you have questions, or would like to find out more, visit our [website](#) or email the project team at: [yanco.sdlprogram@dpie.nsw.gov.au](mailto:yanco.sdlprogram@dpie.nsw.gov.au)

## Regional Water Strategies



At the end of 2022, the department finalised and published 5 of 12 regional water strategies. These covered the Gwydir, Border Rivers, North Coast, South Coast and Western regions.

The strategies bring together the best and latest climate evidence using a wide range of tools and solutions to help plan for the water needs of NSW for the coming 20-40 years.

The strategies have been developed in consultation with local communities, water service providers, local councils, industry groups, Aboriginal groups and other key stakeholders.

The remaining strategies will be finalised throughout 2023 with Namoi due for publication in early February.

In December and January, we also published *What we heard* reports for [Macquarie-Castlereagh](#), [Lachlan](#), [Murray](#) and [Murrumbidgee](#) regional water strategies.

Due to the extensive and ongoing flooding situation that impacted the Lachlan community during public exhibition, the draft strategy will be re-exhibited in early 2023.

You can check out all strategies and status to date [here](#).





Please note: Current weather conditions may impact scheduled consultations.  
Please remain up to date on any changes via our [stakeholder engagement page](#).

### **Proposed rules for floodplain harvesting access licences to be included in Namoi Valley regulated river water sharing plan Public exhibition 1 December 2022 - 29 January 2023**

To find out more and have your say, please visit our [project page](#).

### **Proposed rules for floodplain harvesting access licences to be included in Namoi Valley unregulated river water sharing plan Public exhibition 1 December 2022 - 28 February 2023**

There will be a public information session held in Gunnedah on Tuesday, 7 February 2023, 10 am - 1 pm. You can [register to attend here](#).

To find out more and have your say, please visit our [project page](#).

## Latest water news from the department

- [A smarter groundwater future starts now](#)
- [SMEC Australia to design Nyngan to Cobar pipeline and pump stations](#)
- [Securing the future for regional town water supply](#)
- [Water security boost in the pipeline for Hunter](#)
- [\\$19 Million Gundagai Sewerage Treatment Plant ready to go](#)

[View all](#)

Follow us on Twitter for more updates

## Contact us

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

NSW Government – Water Relations  
Phone 1300 081 047  
[water.relations@dpie.nsw.gov.au](mailto:water.relations@dpie.nsw.gov.au)

Subscribe to Water News

[View previous newsletters](#)



Department of Planning and Environment, Dharug Country, 4 Parramatta Square, 12 Darcy Street,  
Parramatta, NSW 2150

[Unsubscribe](#) [Manage preferences](#)