

September 2022 | ISSUE #39

Get involved with Frog monitoring in your local waterway!



Image credit: Daniel Coleman

The Department of Planning and Environment - Water is partnering with the Australian Museum to learn more about the health of our waterways by monitoring frog responses to river flows, using the [FrogID](#) app.

Most frog species depend on water to complete their life cycle. This makes them great indicators of ecosystem health. Monitoring frogs can help us assess outcomes of water sharing plans, the State Water Strategy and other water management activities.

A drop in frog populations can be an early warning sign of environmental stress such as pollution, drought or habitat changes. We can use this important data to inform the way we manage water resources.

Frogs are experts at camouflage, so you often hear them before you see them. The FrogID app is a fun and easy way to learn more about the incredible frogs living on your property, from the Stony Creek Frog to the Giant Banjo Frog, and provide us valuable information.

To get involved, all you need to do is download the [FrogID app](#) and use it to record the frogs in your local area. Every whistle, bleat, croak and bark can help us make informed decisions about conservation and water management ensuring the waterways that frogs call home will be around for many generations to come.

To get involved, download the FrogID app from the Apple store or Google Play, and start recording.

NSW Water Strategy delivering water wins



Image credit: Destination NSW

Communities across the state are already benefiting from the NSW Water Strategy. The first progress report found it achieved major milestones in the first 12 months.

The NSW Water Strategy is the state's first-ever long-term plan for water, putting concrete actions in place to improve the security, reliability, quality and resilience across the state. It is delivering real results to residents, Aboriginal communities, farmers, water users and the environment. Of the 123 actions in the 2021-22 implementation plan, 96 per cent are now complete, or in progress to be completed.

Major achievements under the strategy include releasing the Greater Sydney Water Strategy and the Lower Hunter Water Security Plan, starting the NSW Water Efficiency Program which includes the highly successful Washing Machine Replacement Trial, and establishing a dedicated Aboriginal Water Program. The strategy has also introduced a new regulatory and assurance framework for local water utilities as part of the Town Water Risk Reduction Program.

The strategy still has more to deliver, with a new implementation plan in place for the next two years.

To learn more about the strategy, implementation plan and progress report, visit [our website](#).

NSW government remains committed to floodplain harvesting licensing regulations.

The NSW Upper House recent decision to disallow historic floodplain harvesting regulations does not change the NSW Government's legal obligations or commitment to implement floodplain harvesting reform. The reform will return water to the floodplains and to downstream users and improve the protections for water sources and their dependent ecosystems.

The disallowance does not alter the fact that floodplain harvesting licences already determined for eligible water users in the NSW Border Rivers and Gwydir Valleys remain valid. These licences came into effect on 12 July 2022, after the relevant water sharing plans were amended. The licensing framework commenced in these valleys on 15 August 2022.

The disallowance does mean there is an inconsistent framework across the northern Basin. The earliest that similar regulations can be put in place is four months after the disallowance.

The department is committed to this important reform and we will also continue to progress parts of the reform that do not depend on the disallowed regulations, including the Improving Floodplain Connections program.

For more information on the NSW Floodplain Harvesting Policy visit our website

Nearly 2 billion litres of water to be saved through leak detection and it's just a start



Leak detection work is delivering great outcomes for the first 22 regional Local Government Areas who have participated in the project. So far, we've surveyed more than 2600 kilometres of water mains and found more than 900 leaks. A lot of these pipes have already been repaired by local councils, saving more than 700 million litres of water per year.

This partnership approach is a positive for councils and communities with the state government providing the technology and councils acting quickly to target and fix leaks. Our experts have located a staggering 2.6 billion litres of water leaking from network pipes each year. They use high-powered listening devices to pinpoint leaks in pipes, meters, and valves. The leaks produce a unique sound that experts can home in on with specialised high-tech gear.

Building on the success of the first round of this program we have just finalised the procurement of two service providers who will work with us and local councils to complete surveys of a further 5000 km of pipeline before June 2023 and a further 2500 km to follow later that year.

The project is the first stage of the larger Regional Leakage Reduction Program, which aims to save up to 7.5 billion litres of water over the next three years.

Learn more about the [Regional Leakage Reduction Program](#)

Updating the size of smaller pumps or bores made easier



If your work (pump or bore) is smaller than what is listed on your works approval, it is now easier to update the size of your works and comply with the [non-urban metering rules](#).

Previously, people who had a works approval for a larger pump or bore but actually used smaller equipment, were at risk of being seen to be non-compliant, which could have led to enforcement action by NRAR.

In addition, we have also made it easier to notify the department of smaller works by allowing water users to use a simple online form. This notification does not amend your approval, so there is no fee for the notification.

These changes are in place to make sure that smaller works can be considered compliant **and** to remove the fee associated with amending approvals.

By only requiring a notification (rather than requiring water users to submit an amendment to their approval), water users can also upsize their equipment to the approved size at any time without having to apply for an amendment.

If the actual size of work is larger than what is listed on the approval, you are in breach of your approval condition and may be subject to compliance actions. You should apply to [amend](#) your approval to increase the size of your authorised work through WaterNSW.

[For more information visit the department's website.](#)

Telemetry rebate supporting metering roll out

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 for each local intelligencet device installed and connected to the NSW government's data acquisition service (DAS).

All 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.

Currently 1,251 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.

Smart sensing and data analytics changes water management



The department is working with researchers through the NSW Smart Sensing Network (NSSN) to trial new technologies and data modelling techniques to enhance how we manage water.

The multidisciplinary project draws on the expertise of researchers from the Australian National University, Macquarie University, University of NSW and the University of Sydney.

These new technologies will help us better serve NSW communities, in a rapidly changing environment. The weather events of recent years have shown we need to understand natural water systems better, and the study has highlighted opportunities to improve our world-leading water monitoring network.

Some of the projects include:

- using NASA satellites to show the gravitational pull of water at both a catchment and a continent, revealing new information on how water moves through the landscape
- demonstrating the use of low-cost sensors for high spatial resolution sensing
- investigating the recharge mechanisms of aquifers, while providing a wealth of knowledge on hydrology
- using Bayesian inference to complete probabilistic modelling, giving insights into how uncertainty around water measurements can be addressed.

Access the final report, [Where is all the water?](#)

Changes to groundwater access rules for the Lower Darling Alluvial Groundwater Source



In August 2022, the *Water Sharing Plan for the Darling Alluvial Groundwater Sources 2020* was changed to better support economic activity in the region, and provide affected licence holders peace of mind during drought.

We have removed a rule that prevented some licence holders from taking water from the Lower Darling Alluvial Groundwater Source unless they were using the water for irrigating perennial horticulture, such as orchards or vineyards.

Since most licence holders have removed their perennial plantings, this change will enable them to use the water for other purposes when there is little surface water available.

Water for the environment will continue to be protected. The extraction limits and other rules limiting access based on salinity levels and surface water availability will continue to apply.

The changes take effect when licence conditions are updated to reflect the changes to the plan.

You can find further information on the changes on our [website](#).

NRAR Updates



How NRAR investigates potential non-compliance with NSW water laws

The Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) takes a risk-based, case-by-case approach to its investigations.

Focusing on areas where the likelihood of non-compliance or harm is highest, the water regulator goes through key stages for each investigation:

1. The investigation is prompted by a report from the public, another agency or a potential issue identified from spatial data or a site visit.
2. The case is assessed, and an investigator reviews and gathers further evidence. This can involve site inspections, interviews and use of the Regulator's [state-of-the-art technology suite](#).
3. If a breach is found, NRAR will determine what the [appropriate response](#) and course of action is based on a variety of factors. These include the degree of harm posed to the environment, community or individual water users.

Watch NRAR's new video to learn about the [lifecycle of an investigation](#).



NRAR is checking compliance in Moree and surrounds

Over the coming months, the Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) will be visiting properties that needed to install accurate meters which were independently verified by 1 December 2021.

The regulator has commenced compliance checks for water users with medium to large sized pumps or bores in Moree and surrounding areas.

Water users due to comply by the upcoming 1 December 2022 deadline should act now to make sure their water take is in line with non-urban water metering regulations.

This includes all works, including pumps above 100 mm and bores above 200 mm in the Lower Darling, Lowbidgee, Murray, Murrumbidgee and Lachlan regions and some at-risk groundwater sources.

Find out more on [NRAR's metering page](#).



Information sessions on non-urban metering rules for water users in southern inland region

Licensed water users in southern inland NSW captured by the non-urban metering requirements must have compliant metering equipment installed by 1 December 2022.

The NSW Government is holding information sessions about the non-urban metering rules for water users in the southern inland area. You will have the opportunity to ask questions of a panel of water managers and regulators, and meet and connect with some of the metering suppliers and installers working in NSW.

You can also bring your works approval number, as staff will be able to provide specific licensing or metering information.

To learn more about the metering rules and how to make sure you meet the requirements, register to attend an information session by visiting our [website](#).

You can learn more about non-urban metering rules and requirements for water users by visiting our [website](#), or use our online [Metering Guidance Tool](#) to see if, and how the rules apply to you.

Does your property have water channels, pipes or bores for water supply or drainage that are shared with other landholders?

We are proposing to switch on parts of the *Water Management Amendment Act 2010* which will enable private irrigation districts and boards, private drainage boards and private water trusts to more easily self-govern and comply with regulations.

The changes would provide greater autonomy for schemes and allow them to:

- create new entities such as private water corporations
- appoint a new chairperson or approve new by-laws without the need for Governor or Ministerial approval
- make and amend their own internal administrative rules based on the needs of the scheme.

Once implemented, these changes will be incorporated in the *Water Management Act 2000*.

We welcome joint private works schemes to provide their feedback to inform the development of new rules and regulations. The new rules will come into place from late 2023.

You can provide your feedback to us by completing [an online survey](#) by 10 October, calling 1300 081 047 or emailing jpws@dpie.nsw.gov.au.

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

Consultation on draft Water Industry Competition (General) Regulation 2022

The department has released the draft Water Industry Competition (General) Regulation 2022 for consultation.

The [Water Industry Competition Act 2006](#) (WIC Act) was amended in late 2021 following a comprehensive review of the Act's operation. The main changes included:

- better targeting of regulation to focus on high-risk, utility-like schemes including those operated by metropolitan councils
- separating the granting of licences from the approval of individual schemes
- new operator of last resort provisions to ensure that essential services continue if a private utility fails financially
- stronger customer protection, including a new standard customer contract.

The [amendments](#) cannot start to operate until the supporting regulation is revised in line with the changes to the Act.

Written submissions are invited and are due by close of business Monday, 17 October 2022. The draft regulation and a Regulatory Impact Statement assessing the costs and benefits are available on our [website](#).

Lachlan and Macquarie-Castlereagh regional water strategies.

The department is inviting members of the public to have their say on both the Lachlan and Macquarie-Castlereagh regional water strategies in October. These strategies are two of 12 being developed across the state to help manage water needs over the 20 years across the state. Consultation will take place in October with both face-to-face meetings in the local community and live webinars. Feedback and issues raised during the public exhibition will be considered when finalising the plans.

Please check out [our website](#) to register for the webinar and further information on the meetings.

Have your say on amendments to the Gwydir Valley Floodplain Management Plan

The department is seeking feedback on the proposed amendments to the Gwydir Valley Floodplain Management Plan. Submissions on the proposed amendments will be accepted from Monday, 26 September to Monday, 31 October 2022.

The floodplain management plan establishes the framework for the coordination of flood work development on a whole-of-valley basis. The plan includes management zones, rules and assessment criteria for granting or amending approvals for flood works within the Gwydir Valley Floodplain.

For more information and to register for the information session, visit the [department's website](#).

Have your say on the draft Kati Thanda - Lake Eyre Basin Strategic Plan

The Australian Government is seeking input on the draft Lake Eyre Basin Strategic Plan. You can now provide feedback on the draft plan which is open until 3

November 2022.

Have your say by visiting the [Australian Government's website](#).

Stay up to date

The Water Engagement Roundup is a monthly webinar that provides updates on current consultation and engagement about important water policies and programs.

Register for the next webinar.

Latest water news from the department

- [No compulsory land acquisitions for Reconnecting River Country](#)
- [First New South Wales water resource plan accredited](#)
- [Progress report finds strategy delivering big water wins for NSW](#)
- [Walcha one step closer to improved water security](#)
- [Flood works remediation to deliver healthier floodplains](#)

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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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