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Message to our readers

We recognise that the current COVID-19 situation is affecting many people in our communities across NSW and Australia. Some of our regional communities are now being impacted along with Greater Sydney, and many people are worried. During this time, we hope you and your loved ones stay safe, get tested if you are showing any symptoms and that we continue to look out for one another.

The NSW Government has [support measures in place to help those impacted](#) by the current COVID-19 restrictions.

Draft Strategy for delivering Aboriginal community outcomes



Water Infrastructure NSW (WINSW) is commencing consultation with Aboriginal stakeholder groups on its draft strategy for delivering Aboriginal community outcomes. The draft strategy outlines our commitment to putting Aboriginal engagement and inclusion at the centre of how WINSW does business and delivers on its objectives.

We need your feedback and input on the draft strategy to ensure we can implement the final strategy, which is due in late 2021. COVID-19 has impacted our

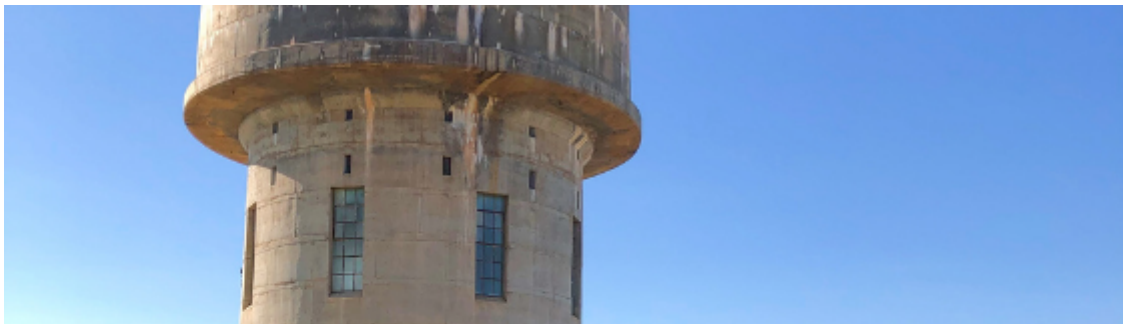
engagement plans, however, we are committed to ensuring we hear from our communities and stakeholders.

The strategy aims to deliver better, more meaningful and collaborative engagement with Aboriginal stakeholders by using tailored consultation. It sets out initiatives across five key areas to improve engagement, involvement and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and to share the benefits of infrastructure investments with these communities.

The strategy is part of a suite of strategies and programs in the department including our Aboriginal Cultural Capability Framework, and the Connecting with Country draft framework.

Read the [draft Strategy for delivering Aboriginal community outcomes](#).

Safe and Secure Water Program gathers momentum



The image above shows Jeff Manks, Berrigan Shire Council, and David Swan, SSWP Program Manager at the Finley site.

Residents in the regional town of Finley will have a safe supply of drinking water for decades to come, thanks to \$4 million in funding from the NSW Government's Safe and Secure Water Program and \$2.67 million from Berrigan Shire Council to construct a new water treatment plant.

Detailed design work has started on the new Finley water treatment plant. Expected to be operational by March 2023, the new plant will ensure the community has clean, reliable and high-quality treated water for many years to come. The community currently relies on water from a treatment plant built in 1940, which is nearing the end of its asset life.

The new water treatment plant will use cutting edge filtration technology using air bubbles to float impurities in the water to the surface. Then uses a sand filter to

remove any additional impurities.

Berrigan Shire's Water and Sewer Overseer Jeff Manks said that after taking care of the old treatment plant for a long time, he was looking forward to operating something new and more efficient.

Read more about the [Safe and Secure Water Program](#).

Christine is giving back to Jubullum



Christine of Jubullum is giving back to her community by playing an essential role in ensuring the 24/7 operation of Jubullum's water supply and sewerage system.

Her work includes regular equipment inspections, grounds and infrastructure maintenance, community consultation and engagement, and emergency response to water and sewerage faults. She's often the first responder during problems, and having Christine on-site means she's there to help in the event of natural disasters. We applaud Christine for her hard work and dedication to her community.

We're providing employment opportunities for Aboriginal people in delivering water and sewerage services, as part of the Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program. Christine is a part of the program.

Learn more about the [Aboriginal Communities Water & Sewerage Program](#).

Response to ICAC findings

In November 2020, the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) released its report into water management issues in NSW, focusing on events up until mid-2017. The *Investigation into complaints of corruption in the management of water in NSW and systemic non-compliance with the Water Management Act 2000* made no findings of corrupt conduct and made 15 recommendations to reduce future corruption risks.

The NSW Government has committed to carrying out all 15 recommendations. Six of these have already been completed (recommendations 3, 4, 6, 11, 12 and 14), and we continue to work to carry out the remaining recommendations.

You can read the NSW Government's response and action plan on the ICAC website.

Some of the initial reforms were completed as part of the Water Reform Action Plan. The plan was established after the Matthews investigation in 2017, which looked at many of the same issues examined by ICAC. Priority 1 of our new Draft NSW Water Strategy builds on this work, and outlines ways for us to improve our engagement, transparency and accountability, and build trust with our community.

You can find out more about the Government's response here.

Curious about how water in NSW is allocated?



We've been working to provide better information to water users on how we manage water in NSW. As part of this, we're developing new explainer videos that address some commonly asked questions about water. We'll be releasing videos on a range of topics over the coming months.

Check out our new explainer [video on how water is allocated in NSW](#) and visit [our website](#) for more on water allocations.

Drought recovery update

Rainfall in the first half of 2021 means good inflows have reached the major rural storages, and there have been high flows downstream. Most rural storages are now 60% or more full, with some at or close to 100%. The overall total rural storage is 75%, compared to 38% at the end of July 2020.

The new water year began on 1 July 2021, and all town water, domestic and stock and high security allocations have received full allocations. All general security users, other than in the Belubula, have received at least a small opening water allocation. There is enough water available to deliver all carried-over general security water.

As a result of improving conditions, we've renamed the 'Drought update' page on our website to 'Drought recovery'.

Visit the drought recovery webpage.

Water compliance priorities set



The Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) has set key priority areas to concentrate its efforts to manage water in NSW in 2021-2022. This year, the agency will be focussing on water meters, irrigated agriculture, excessive extraction and groundwater sources.

Of these, the key priority is the reform of non-urban water meters. Under these reforms, water users must install accurate meters for pumps above a certain size, or else show they are making a genuine effort to comply. The regulator will now strengthen enforcement of these rules across NSW.

High volume water users in the irrigated agriculture industry will get special attention this year to ensure they are following the rules, while water users who exceed their allocation will come under even greater scrutiny than before.

Finally, NRAR will be focussing on extraction from groundwater sources to protect fragile resources and their complex water-dependent ecosystems.

Read more about [our regulatory priorities 2021-22](#)

NRAR steps up meter enforcement



The state's independent water regulator will start enforcing metering rules after finding 45 per cent of affected pumps were still not fitted with an accurate meter. All pumps 500 mm and above were required to have accurate meters installed by a certified person by December 1, 2020.

State-wide inspections by NRAR found that 45 per cent of water works were not compliant, 32 per cent were partially compliant and 23 per cent were fully compliant.

To be fully compliant, all pumps 500 mm and above must have accurate meters installed which are validated by a certified professional and can transmit water take to a central database. Partially compliant water users only completed part of these requirements.

A new deadline is looming for water users in the northern inland region of the state on December 1, 2021. All works, including pumps above 100 mm and bores above 200 mm in the Macquarie, Gwydir, Namoi, Border Rivers and Barwon–Darling regions must be properly metered by that date.

NRAR's Chief Regulatory Officer Grant Barnes said affected water users had made progress, but he was concerned that enforcement action was necessary against so many of the state's largest water users.

[Read more.](#)

New on the Water website

Annual release of the general purpose water accounting reports



General purpose water accounting reports are now available for the 2019-20 water year. We produce annual reports for all regulated river water sources within the Murray–Darling Basin.

Water resource accounting is an important part of being transparent about water management and information. The reports examine the current trends, demand, accessibility, status and use of water across the state using national standards. NSW continues to lead the nation in standardised water resource accounting.

Water accounting assembles information that supports and improves planning, policy development, strategy development and underpins decision making. These reports also give water users a consolidated, validated, comparable and publicly accessible set of water accounting information for the water year, which can be very valuable.

You can access the reports on [our website](#).

Water infrastructure portal

Water Infrastructure NSW (WINSW) is responsible for leading the development and delivery of key government water infrastructure projects and programs across the state.

Read about the latest water infrastructure projects in NSW, including new dams, major pipelines, regional projects and more.

Have your say

Current and upcoming consultations and information events:

[Dungowan Dam and Pipeline Environmental Impact Statement webinar](#)
3 August 2021

- 9.30am - 11.00am

- 5.00pm - 6.30pm

[View all](#)

Latest water news from the department

- [NRAR takes action as 45% of affected pumps not fitted with accurate meters](#)
- [NSW water allocations reflect some easing after record drought conditions](#)

[View all](#)

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:

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