

Independent Facilitator Update – June 2021
Yanco Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment (SDLAM) Program

On 16 June 2021, the Yanco Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) met at Morundah for meeting #10 to consider the latest updates about the [Yanco projects](#).

The SAG welcomed Brad Hollis (A/Director Southern Projects, Water Infrastructure NSW) by video link. Brad mostly spoke about the rescoping of the Yanco Creek Offtake Project that was [announced](#) by the Murray Darling Basin Ministerial Council on 30 April 2021. It was pleasing to hear that Water Infrastructure NSW (part of Department of Planning Industry and Environment) has heard community concerns regarding the original proposal and that the department is focusing investigations on options that are outside of a new regulator in the Yanco Offtake Cutting. It was noted that options are continuing to be investigated that include a potential raising of the full supply level above the top of the existing fixed crest weir in the Murrumbidgee but at a height well below the 2.5m increase that was initially proposed.

Brad also indicated that Water Infrastructure NSW is developing a proposal for the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (the Commonwealth) to consider that includes a range of activities that extend beyond just the site of the existing Yanco Creek Offtake Project. The refreshed proposal would aim to improve connectivity throughout the Murrumbidgee system, including the Yanco Creek System with a focus on more than potential water saving volumes. The limited amount of detail currently available is frustrating however the group welcomed the advice that the Yanco Creek Offtake Project is being rescoped.

Investigations continue for the [Yanco Creek Modernisation Project](#) and the project team are prioritising investigations into a series of early works, including potential replacements of Hartwood and Wanganella weirs on the Billabong Creek with new re-regulation weirs; potential new infrastructure at Wanganella Swamp to more efficiently provide improved environmental outcomes and potential improved and/or new flow measurement sites throughout the Yanco Creek System. An [accelerated program](#) is being developed to enable the Yanco Creek Modernisation Project to be fully completed by 30 June 2024. Local communities and landholders will be engaged throughout the process prior to any final investment decisions being made.

Vince Kelly from WaterNSW spoke about the history of river operations within the Yanco Creek System. This includes a change that has occurred over time resulting in a greater amount of planned water deliveries being made into the Yanco Creek System via three irrigation escape channels that are owned and operated by Coleambally Irrigation Co-operative Limited and Murray Irrigation Limited. These changes were introduced with the aim of improving water delivery efficiencies within the Yanco Creek System including a reduction in the amount of water consumed by evaporation and seepage throughout the Yanco Creek System. The future of use of these escapes will be reviewed as part of the Yanco Creek Modernisation Project.

Yanco Stakeholder Advisory Group continues to strongly advocate for the need for minimum baseline flow targets on a reach by reach basis throughout the Yanco Creek System. It was encouraging to hear advice that a new Yanco Creek System Operations Plan (in development) can be linked to the Murrumbidgee Water Sharing Plan. This is seen by the SAG as an important requirement to help protect baseline flows throughout the Yanco Creek System into the future.

Updates were provided by Water Infrastructure NSW regarding the on-going development of new computer models needed to assess various options being considered under the Yanco Creek Modernisation Project and Yanco Creek Offtake Project. These models will be important for estimating the potential benefits and impacts of various options being investigated.

After considering a range of different views, the group advised Water Infrastructure NSW that the next round of community information sessions about the Yanco projects should be held in September when more information about the proposed rescope of the Yanco Creek Offtake Project will be available.

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