

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water


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# Improving Floodplain Connections Program

Webinar Report – Namoi and Macquarie valleys

January 2024



# Acknowledgement of Country

The Department Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acknowledges that it stands on Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and we show our respect for Elders past, present and emerging through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically.

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# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Background .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Webinar session.....</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1	Questions and answers.....	6
2.2	Session follow-up .....	8

# 1 Background

The aim of the Improving Floodplain Connections (IFC) program is to improve the passage of floodwater through the five valleys of the northern Murray–Darling Basin. It does this by bringing priority unapproved flood works into compliance quickly. Flood works include structures such as levees/embankments, above ground storages, supply channels, and access roads.

Ensuring that unapproved flood works become compliant will help protect flood-dependent ecosystems, Aboriginal cultural values and heritage sites, and provide social and economic benefits to downstream water users.

The IFC program is being completed in three tranches across the northern valleys. This report focuses on valleys in Tranche 2 – the Namoi and Macquarie valleys. It provides a record of a webinar that was held in November 2023 for landholders identified as owning property on which priority unapproved flood works are located.

## 2 Webinar session

The webinar session was part of the engagement process delivered by the Water Group of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (the Water Group) to implement the IFC program in the Namoi and Macquarie valleys. The intention of the session was to provide potentially affected landowners with general information about the IFC program in advance of being contacted by the Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) to arrange site visits, which is the next step in the assessment process.

The session was held on 20 November 2023 and was attended by 13 participants from the Namoi and Macquarie valleys, in addition to representatives from Crown Lands, WaterNSW, NRAR and the Water Group. During and after the presentation, participants were able to provide comments and ask questions of the government representatives.

The session was conducted as a series of presentations. The presentation structure is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Presentation structure for the IFC webinar on 20 November 2023

Topic	Presenter
Introduction	Steve Rossiter, ATX Consulting
Overview of the IFC program – purpose, benefits, process	Dan Connor, Director Floodplain Management, Water Group
Review and assessment of unapproved priority flood works	Ellie Randall, Manager – IFC Delivery, Water Group
Progress so far	Ellie Randall, Manager – IFC Delivery, Water Group
Final questions and wrap up	Steve Rossiter, ATX Consulting

The presentation slides from the webinar are available on the [Water Group's website](#).

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## 2.1 Questions and answers

The following is a report of the questions asked and answers provided throughout the session. While the best attempts have been made to capture both questions and answers as accurately as possible, the reporting may not be verbatim.

### 2.1.1 Review and assessment

The questions and answers in Table 2 relate to the information provided in the presentation about the review and assessment of unapproved priority flood works.

Table 2. Questions and answers about the review and assessment process

Question	Response
There was a map in Ellie’s presentation that indicated where the works are. Can we have a look at that?	This map will be made available to people through the publishing of the presentation on the website. This map is sufficiently broad enough so as not to be able to identify people’s individual properties so will not compromise anyone’s privacy.
The program is voluntary, what does that mean? What happens if someone chooses not to participate in the IFC program?	This is an accelerated compliance program. We are trying to work collaboratively with landowners and other agencies. There are high priority works that are identified in this program. If someone chooses not to participate in the program, then the work would be referred to NRAR and it would go through the normal compliance process. With the IFC program, we are trying to work with people to get good outcomes and provide people access to the fee waivers and help in the flood work assessment and application process.

## 2.1.2 Progress so far

The questions and answers in Table 3 were asked during the presentation about the progress of the IFC program to date.

Table 3. Questions and answers about the progress the IFC program has made so far

Question	Response
<p>With the timeframes for the Namoi, it would appear to have the site consultations done before Christmas and the flood work applications by the end of January. Are people organised for that given the time of year? The timing doesn't seem to be great to be very productive.</p>	<p>We have started site consultations in the Namoi and in the coming weeks the first of the flood works are beginning the approvals pathway process. The dates are indicative, we understand that we could go over these dates.</p> <p>We are not going to be unreasonable about the timelines and will work with the landholder to make sure we get the best outcome for everyone.</p>
<p>Will there be staff available over the Christmas period if people have questions?</p>	<p>Yes. We will make sure that people are not disadvantaged over the Christmas period. We do have a shutdown period, but we will have people on so landholders can still use the IFC email address if they need to reach out to us.</p> <p>To emphasise, that if a landholder gets a letter, we encourage them to be proactive and reach out to us and we will work with them through the process. If there are challenges with the time of year, people can let us know that as early as possible and we can work around that with them.</p>
<p>Are you able to say now if you've got 25% of people booked in for site consultations or is it 80%? How close are you to hitting the mark in the Namoi with notifying affected landholders?</p>	<p>We have easily got 80% booked in at this stage.</p>
<p>The timing for the Macquarie is later. Is that correct?</p>	<p>Yes. We should have finished the assessments for the Macquarie by the end of the year. We are hoping to be out in the Macquarie around February to March for site consultations.</p>

## 2.1.3 General

The question and answer in Table 4 was asked during the webinar as a follow up to the information provided in the presentation.

Table 4. Question and answer asked of a general nature after the presentation

Question	Response
In terms of the data shown about the categorisation process – could you clarify what that actually says?	<p>There is no pre-conceived outcome here. We are really going through site by site, firstly looking at the desktop work and then following up with field inspections and we are seeing every possible outcome. This includes works no longer being in the landscape, sometimes as a result of conversations that have been had as part of floodplain harvesting or floodplain management plans. Landholders have already removed the work from the landscape.</p> <p>Similarly, there are a number of ‘no further actions required’ where, after investigation, we don’t need to take any action under the program so we can close off that work.</p>

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## 2.2 Session follow-up

Participants were sent a link to the presentation slides and recording after the session. The presentation is also published on the Water Group’s [website](#) for those unable to attend the session.

Additionally, the IFC team is seeking feedback from key water user groups on the engagement process including barriers to participating in engagement opportunities for the IFC program.