

# Reconnecting River Country Program overview



Aerial view overlooking the town of Balranald in the Riverina district. Credit: Destination NSW

The Reconnecting River Country Program is a key initiative under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan (Basin Plan), designed to create healthier, more resilient river systems in the Murray and Murrumbidgee valleys. This will ensure future generations can enjoy the benefits of thriving river systems and wetlands.

Currently, river regulation and water extractions mean rivers connect to wetlands and floodplains far less often than needed to maintain healthy ecosystems. While water for the environment aims to restore balance, its effectiveness is limited by constraints such as physical, policy and operational barriers. These constraints contribute to the ongoing decline in the health of Country and the species that depend on these environments.

The program seeks to remove constraints, enabling more flexible use of environmental water. This will increase the frequency and extent of river connections with wetlands and floodplains.

Removing constraints is critical to achieving the Basin Plan's improved environmental outcomes and making the best use of water already recovered from communities.

Under the program, higher, more frequent environmental flows will be delivered to better mimic the river's natural cycle. The timing, frequency and duration of these flows will vary over time based on climate conditions, water availability, ecological priorities and operational requirements and risks.

The program is funded by the Australian Government.

## The Reconnecting River Country Program Murrumbidgee Project

The Murrumbidgee Project covers the Murrumbidgee River from Burrinjuck Dam to its junction with the River Murray, including the Yanco-Billabong Creek system. The project is funded to:

- deliver a Final Business Case (completed February 2025)
- progress actions to provide river operators with the authorising environment needed to deliver higher environmental flows
- undertake negotiations with affected landholders in the Phase 1 area under the Landholder Negotiation Scheme, to support environmental flows in line with the Murrumbidgee Regulated Water Sharing Plan after 2026, but only if all necessary agreements are in place and operational readiness is confirmed

- deliver infrastructure projects to remove and replace critical low-lying public assets, including construction of the new Mundarlo Bridge near Gundagai and the raising of Mundowry Lane near Collingullie
- scope public mitigation infrastructure for future project delivery (subject to funding and Basin Plan extension)
- design and deliver First Nations enabling measures.

The Final Business Case recommended an upper flow limit of 40,000ML/day at the Wagga Wagga gauge, supported by a phased delivery approach to maximise progress within the current Basin Plan timeframe.

This upper flow limit provides the greatest environmental and cultural benefits and is significantly below the 2022 flood level and remains under the minor flood threshold in most areas.



Credit: Destination NSW

## Murrumbidgee Project phases

The Murrumbidgee Project is proposed to be delivered in 2 phases:

- **Phase 1 delivery (commenced in 2025)**

Phase 1 focuses on reaching voluntary agreements with the most affected landholders between Darlington Point and Balranald. It also includes scoping public works, delivering First Nations measures and implementing an improved flow notification system. This phase aligns with current Basin Plan timeframes and may support higher environmental flows, up to current Water Sharing Plan limits (32,000ML/day at Gundagai), after 2026. This will only occur if all necessary agreements are in place and operational readiness is confirmed.

- **Phase 2 delivery (proposed to commence in 2027 through to 2031, subject to Basin Plan continuation and additional funding)**

Phase 2 aims to secure the full flow corridor, deliver required infrastructure works and First Nations enabling measures. Progression to this phase is contingent on further Australian Government funding and continuation of the Basin Plan.

No higher environmental flows above the current temporary limit of 22,000ML/day at Wagga Wagga will occur before December 2026, and flows at the new upper limit will not commence until after 2031.

Once the Murrumbidgee Project is fully delivered, future environmental flows will connect with more than twice the current wetland area and nearly triple the extent of river red gum forests and woodlands, compared to current conditions.

**Figure 1 – Phase 1 negotiation area (Darlington Point to Balranald).**



## The Reconnecting River Country Program Murray Project

As part of the Murray Project, the program is funded to:

- progress technical studies including hydraulic modelling, environmental benefits and risk assessments, and climate change and salinity impact assessments
- replace ageing water infrastructure in the Werai Forest.

The Murray Project is still in development and landholder engagement is currently paused.

The recommended upper flow limit has not yet been determined and assessment of all flow options will need to be undertaken as part of a detailed Final Business Case. This work is dependent on continuation of the Basin Plan, additional funding, and recommendations from the Murray-Darling Basin Authority's (MDBA) Independent Advisory Panel. The panel was formed in response to the Constraints Relaxation Implementation Roadmap published in December 2024.

The NSW Government continues to work with the MDBA and other Basin state governments on a collective pathway to deliver the Murray constraints project.

To view the Constraints Relaxation Implementation Roadmap visit [www.mdba.gov.au/publications-and-data/publications/constraints-relaxation-implementation-roadmap](http://www.mdba.gov.au/publications-and-data/publications/constraints-relaxation-implementation-roadmap)

## Inundation mapping

Visit the online inundation mapping tool to find out if your property is in the flow corridor at [water.nsw.gov.au/rrcp-inundation-mapping](http://water.nsw.gov.au/rrcp-inundation-mapping)

### Find out more

To learn more about the Reconnecting River Country Program

- visit and subscribe for updates [water.nsw.gov.au/rrcp](http://water.nsw.gov.au/rrcp)
- email [water.enquiries@dcceew.nsw.gov.au](mailto:water.enquiries@dcceew.nsw.gov.au)
- phone 1300 081 047



Scan the QR code to visit the project webpage.

