Reconnecting River Country Program

Securing the Murrumbidgee flow corridor

Morning sun rising over the town of Narrandera. Credit: Destination NSW

The Reconnecting River Country Program's Murrumbidgee Project is establishing a flow corridor to enable the flexible use of water for the environment to connect the river to its wetlands and floodplains more regularly.

What is the Murrumbidgee flow corridor?

The Murrumbidgee flow corridor is the area of land to be inundated by environmental flows up to the selected upper flow limit of 40,000 ML/day at the Wagga Wagga gauge. It includes the riverbank, riparian zone, wetlands and low-level floodplain areas, to more closely mimic the natural cycle of the river.

As a risk mitigation measure, the flow corridor also has a flow buffer of an additional 5,000 ML/day at Wagga Wagga. This provides a safeguard for landholders in the rare event flow targets are exceeded due to exceptional circumstances or inherent uncertainties in weather and flow forecasting, and unexpected tributary inflows. The buffer is not a target for flow delivery but defines the extent of the flow corridor and associated compensation determined in negotiations.

You can view detailed inundation mapping and find out if your property is in the Murrumbidgee flow corridor at water.nsw.gov.au/rrcp-inundation-mapping

What is an inundation easement?

An inundation easement is a legal agreement, also known as an easement in gross, that will allow the occasional and temporary inundation from environmental flows within the flow corridor. This includes flows up to 40,000 ML/day at Wagga Wagga, plus the 5,000 ML/day buffer.

Establishing inundation easements will assist river operators to periodically deliver higher flows for environmental purposes.

Compensation for inundation easements

Landholders in the flow corridor will be invited to negotiate for inundation easements and will be compensated in accordance with the *Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991* (Just Terms Act).

Easement agreements will set out the terms and conditions for landholders and river operators relating to the inundation of their land from environmental flows. These agreements will include compensation for landholders. Compensation may include financial payments, or in some cases mitigation works.

An independent valuer, engaged by the program, will assess compensation based on:

- market value of the land
- the extent of the inundation
- potential impacts to the property and assets.

Landholders are encouraged to get their own legal and valuation advice. The program will cover reasonably incurred expenses relating to these services.

Find out more about the Just Terms Act at legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/current/act-1991-022

Will inundation easements allow public access?

No, inundation easements will not allow public or government access. Existing land use and access rights will not be changed.

If government access is needed for monitoring or construction, separate agreements will be made with landholders.

Are there alternatives to inundation easements?

Alternatives to inundation easements such as deeds of release have been identified for properties with minimal inundation impacts from proposed environmental water releases. Engagement with landholders whose properties may be suitable for a deed of release will occur in stages as part of Phase 1 delivery, subject to funding.

Environmental water release notification

Under the Landholder Negotiation Scheme, WaterNSW is required to take reasonable steps to notify affected landholders of an upcoming environmental water release. Notifications will provide landholders with adequate time to move livestock, or other assets, to higher ground out of the inundation zone.

The program is currently working with WaterNSW on the development of an improved flow notification system, which will be in place before higher environmental water releases start.

Flow corridor delivery

Negotiations with landholders in the project area will take place in phases, starting with Phase 1 following the gazettal of the Declaration Order.

During negotiations, each landholder will be supported by a dedicated acquisition support team. Landholders will be notified in advance before receiving a formal invitation to negotiate.

Negotiations with landholders outside the Phase 1 area are expected to commence after December 2026, subject to relevant Murray-Darling Basin Plan and funding considerations. The Declaration Order will need to be amended to include additional areas subject to negotiations.

Until then, the program will engage with landholders outside the Phase 1 area in partnership with Local Land Services. This engagement will focus on raising awareness of the program, understanding potential benefits and impacts at a property-level and discussing and validating inundation mapping.

If your property is outside the Phase 1 area and may be affected, we encourage you to register with the program to learn more at water.nsw.gov.au/reconnecting-river-country-program

Negotiation process under the Landholder Negotiation Scheme

The Landholder Negotiation Scheme (LNS) provides the voluntary negotiation process with landholders affected by changes to future environmental water arrangements.

Under the LNS:

- Landholders have up to 12 months to negotiate an agreement.
- Independent facilitation and mediation services are available to landholders where negotiations have stalled or a neutral third-party is required to continue negotiations.
- If no agreement is reached, compulsory acquisition (of an interest in land) under the Just Terms Act may be pursued in rare and exceptional circumstances with ministerial approval. Compulsory acquisition of an interest in land will not be pursued before December 2026.

More information on the negotiation process can be found in Figure 2. Landholders will be contacted to arrange a commencement meeting.

Negotiation process

Figure 2 — Landholder Negotiation Scheme – process for seeking voluntary agreements

Next steps

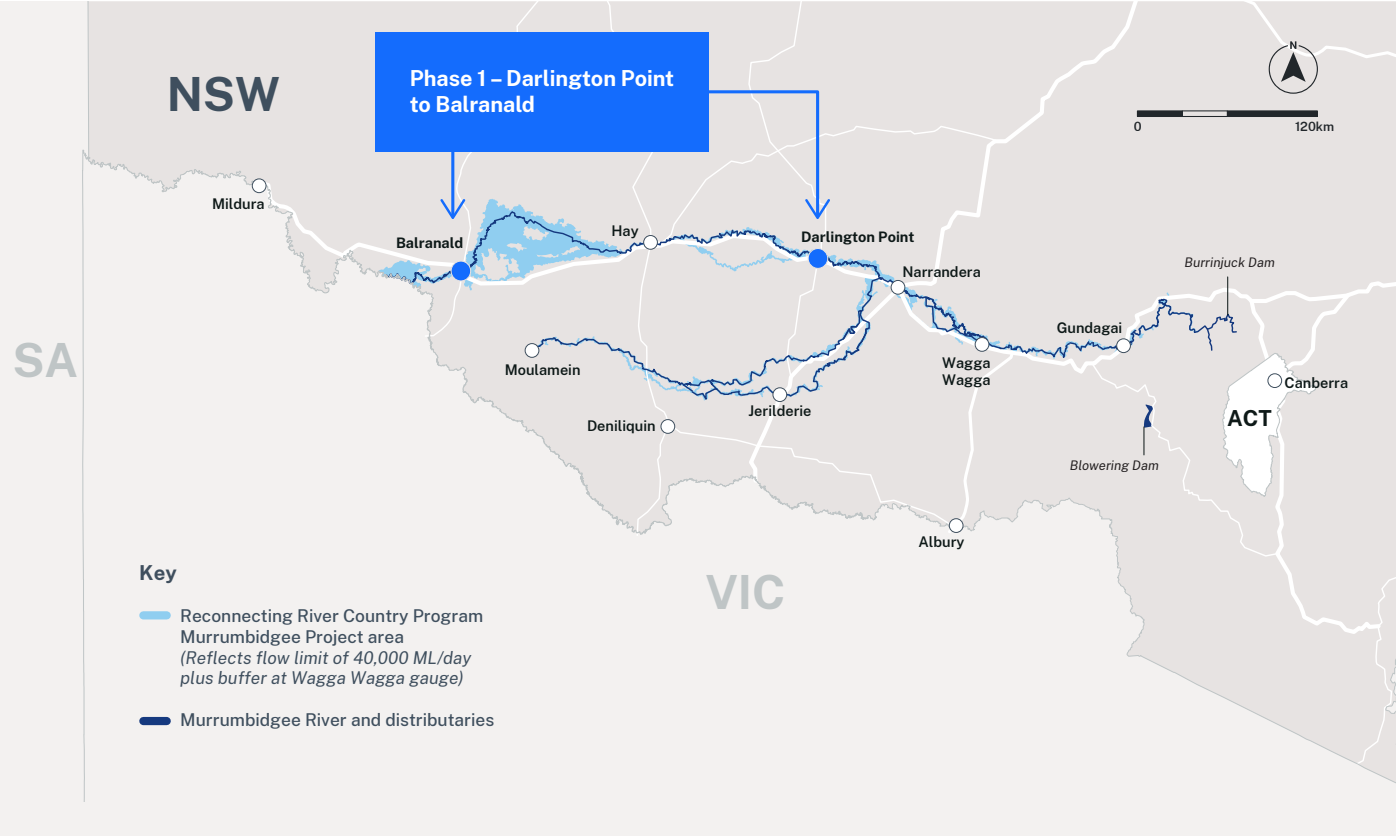
The Declaration Order

The Declaration Order was made on 29 August 2025 under Sch 9, s 3 of the *Water Management (General) Regulation 2025* to begin negotiations for the Murrumbidgee Project between Darlington Point and Balranald (Phase 1).

This area contains the most affected properties along the Murrumbidgee flow corridor, representing more than 50% of the inundation area. These properties are prioritised for flow corridor negotiations.

Find out more about the Declaration Order at water.nsw.gov.au/reconnecting-river-country-program

Figure 1 — Phase 1 negotiation area (Darlington Point to Balranald)



Find out more

To learn more about the Reconnecting River Country Program

- visit and subscribe for updates water.nsw.gov.au/rrcp
- email water.enquiries@dcceew.nsw.gov.au
- phone 1300 081 047

Scan the QR code to visit the project webpage.

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