

Additional consultation for unregulated river access rules

Finalising Inland Unregulated Water Sharing Plans for the Gwydir, Namoi & Peel, Macquarie/Wambuul Bogan and Lachlan

September 2025

Peter Hyde Director Inland Planning



Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acknowledges that it stands on Aboriginal land.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and water, and we show our respect for Elders past, present and emerging.

We do this 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.

Artist and designer Nikita Ridgeway from Aboriginal design agency – Boss Lady Creative Designs, created the People and Community symbol.

Foreword

We acknowledge some proposed revised rules under current consultation represent large changes in access and this may be frustrating or upsetting at this stage of the process.

We ask that you listen respectfully as we share information about what and why it is proposed, as we will listen and respectfully answer your questions.

We encourage you to remember that this session and supporting materials aim to help you make an informed submission to help finalise the plans.

Introduction

We are here to...

- **Talk** with you about what is happening with replacement of 7 inland water sharing plans (WSPs) that lapsed on 1 July 2025
 - **Acknowledge** this replacement process looks different to past replacements
 - **Advise** you of proposed revised access rules changes in 11 specific areas across 4 WSPs
 - **Explain** what the revised rules aim to achieve and what they may mean for water access
 - **Seek** your feedback on revised rules and/or hear other ideas or ways to achieve the intended outcomes
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Update on lapsed plans

- Since the 7 plans lapsed on 1 July 2025:
 - Belubula Regulated WSP commenced on 15 August 2025
 - Murrumbidgee Unregulated WSP is being considered for approval and concurrence
 - Gwydir, Namoi & Peel, Macquarie/Wambuul Bogan, Lachlan Unregulated WSPs are undergoing additional consultation on proposed revised access rules
 - Barwon-Darling Unregulated WSP will be considered together with the above plans once they are finalised, as 3 of the above 4 plans are tributaries of the Barwon-Darling
- Today, we are providing an overview of all 11 water sources and management zones in the 4 plan areas where rule changes are proposed before finalising the replacement plan.
- Feedback received as part of this broad process will be considered prior to making final recommendations for the 4 affected unregulated water sharing plans.

Location of proposed revised cease-to-pump access rules

Gwydir

1. Copeton Dam Management Zone
2. Moredun Creek Water Source
3. Tycannah Creek Water Source

Namoi and Peel

4. Cockburn River Management Zone
5. Maules and Horsearm Creek Management Zone
6. Macdonald River Upstream Woolbrook Management Zone
7. Macdonald and Namoi Rivers Management Zone

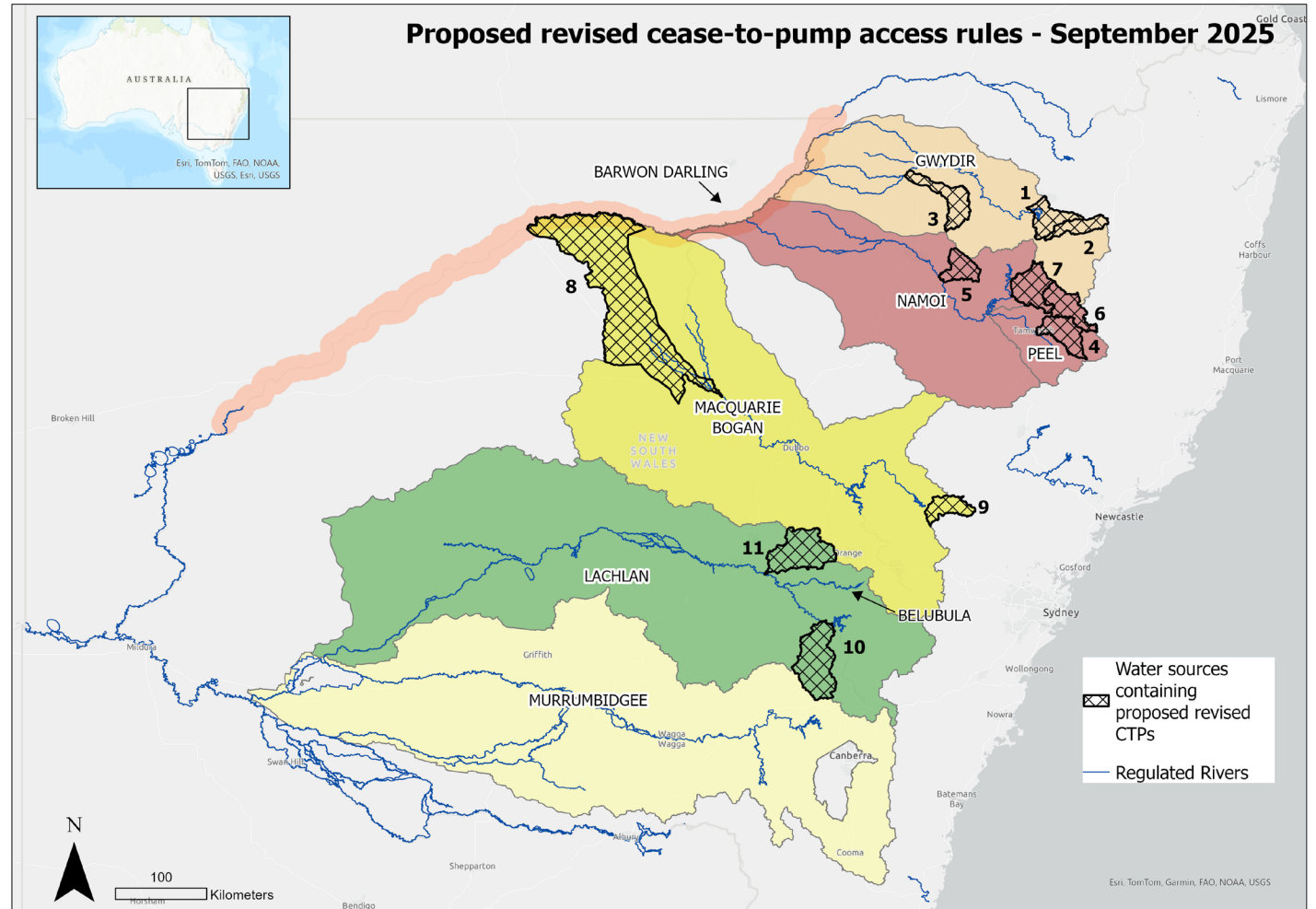
Macquarie/Wambuul Bogan

8. Lower Bogan River Water Source
9. Cudgegong River Downstream Management Zone

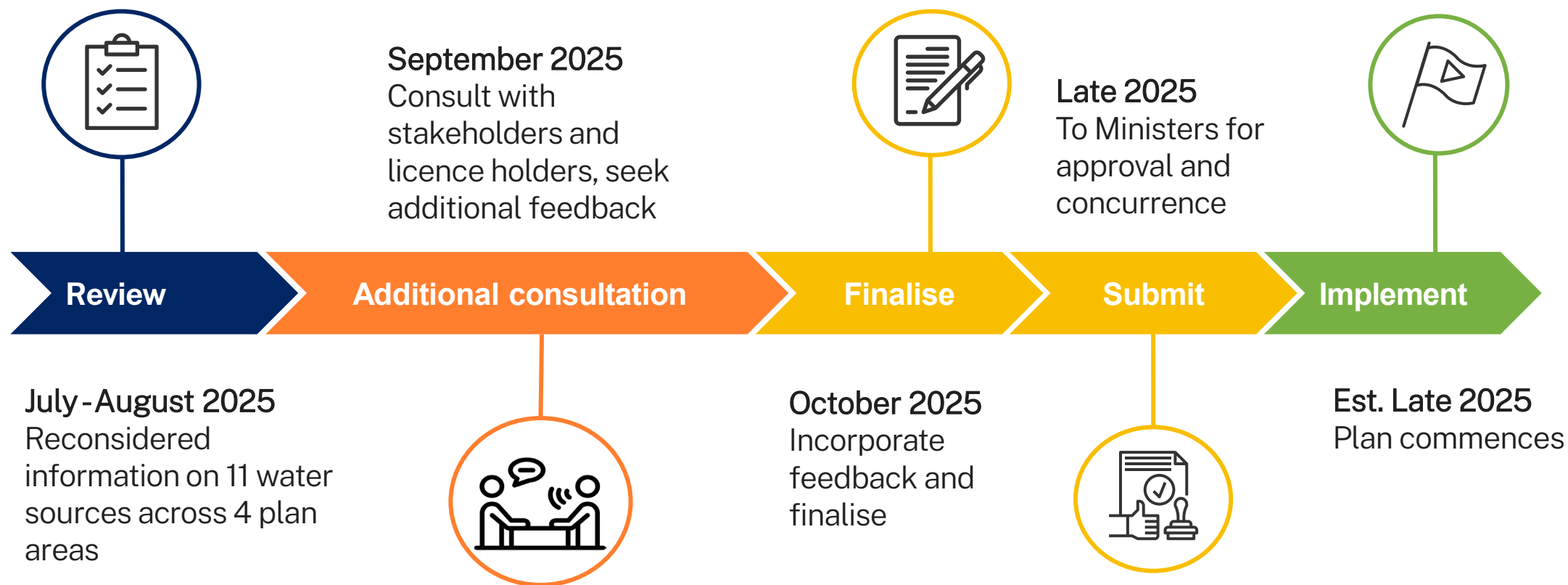
Lachlan

10. Boorowa River and Hovells Creek Water Source
11. Lower Mandagery Creek Management Zone

(Above management zones apply in only part of the corresponding numbered water source shown on the map)



Next steps for 4 plans....



Why further changes are being proposed

- The water sources in question have high instream/ecosystem values and support threatened aquatic species
- They have identified high risks to zero and/or low flows from extraction pressure
- After reviewing environmental conditions and risks, revised access rules are proposed now rather than by amendment in the previously exhibited draft plan. This helps to ensure the plans are right from the start and provides greater certainty for the term of the replacement plan

Why further changes are being proposed

- Information reviewed included
 - cumulative risks to multiple threatened species and critical ecosystem functions
 - flow requirements to support species, ecosystem functions & water quality
 - opportunities to reduce cease-to-flow events and increase the proportion of time species' needs are met
- The main way to protect these values is to reduce how often the creeks and rivers stop flowing and to protect low flows
- It is also beneficial to protect baseflows to allow fish to move and breed as well as improve connectivity

Image: Belinda Collingsburn/DCCEEW

Gwydir

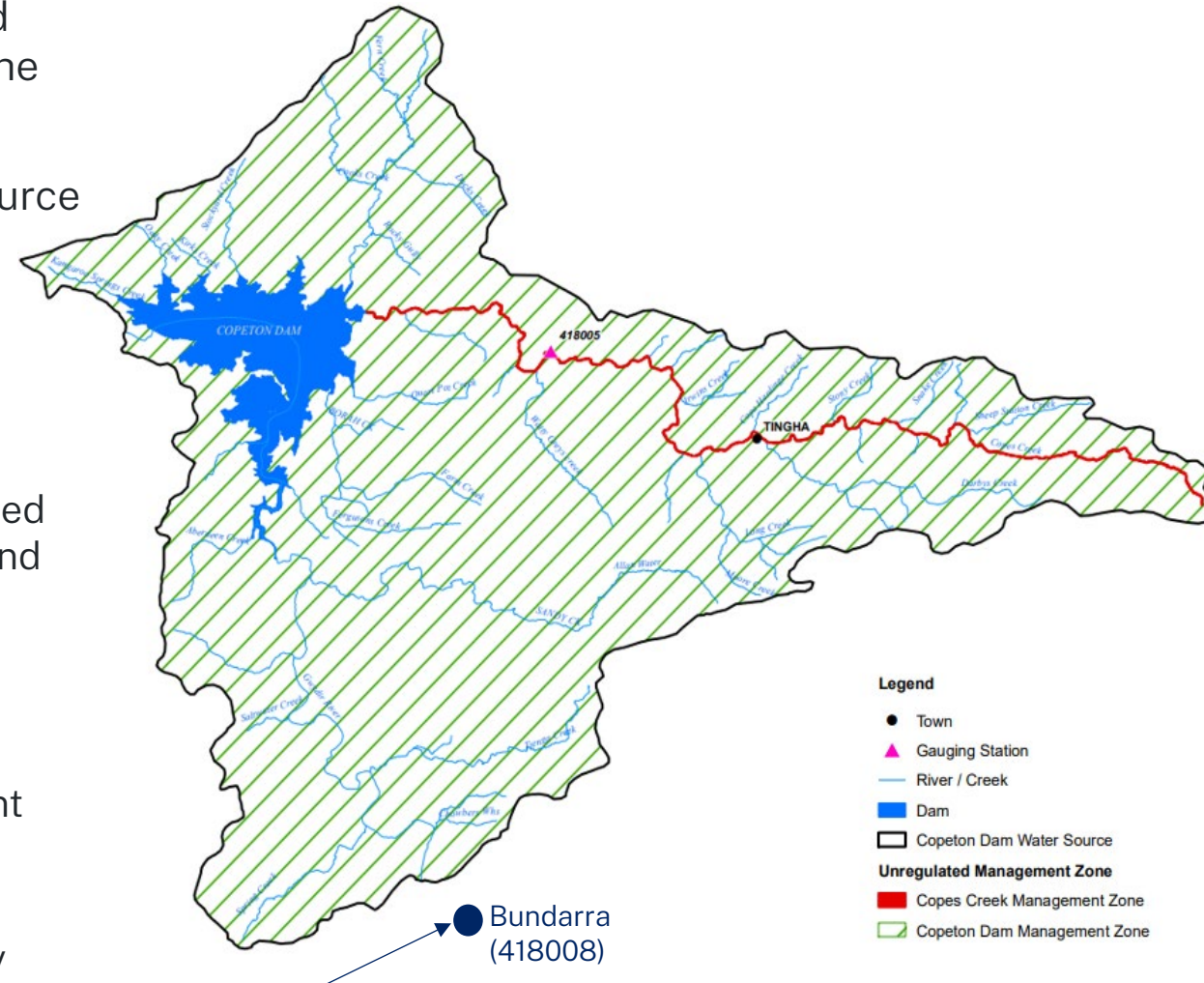
Proposed changes



Copeton Dam Water Source

Copeton Dam Management Zone

- We propose to change the access rule in the newly created Copeton Dam Management Zone from No Visible Flow at the pump site to 80ML/day at Bundarra Gauge
- The river gauge at Bundarra is in Moredun Creek Water Source
- Rule change aims to:
 - Reduce cease to flow periods
 - Improve river connectivity and filling of refuge pools
 - Protect high instream value areas and support threatened and endangered species like Murray Cod, Bell's turtle and eel-tailed catfish
 - Mitigate potential water quality issues by ensuring a minimum flow velocity past the gauge
 - Provide a minimum flow depth to support fish movement
 - Provide benefits to basic landholder rights
 - Improve implementation of the rules and compliance by linking access rules to an active telemetric gauge



Copeton Dam Water Source

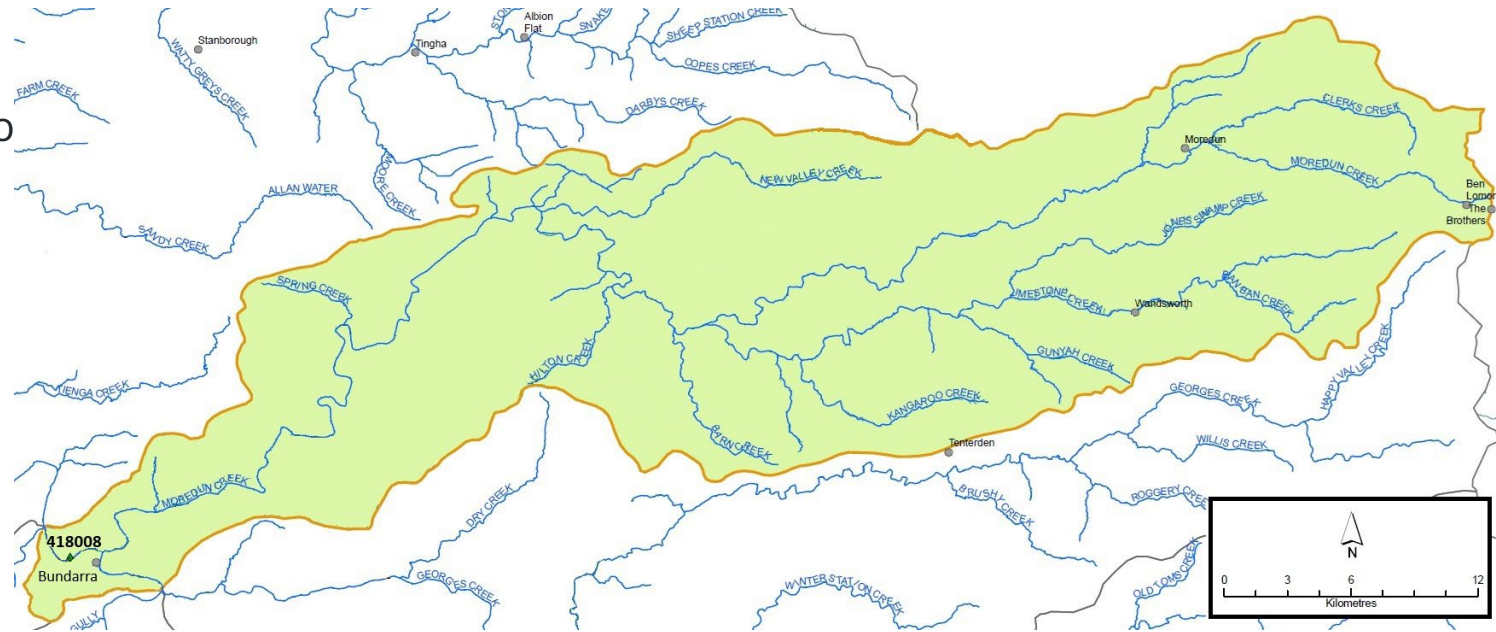
Copeton Dam Management Zone

Time period	Average days/year that take is not permitted at no visible flow (existing rule)	Average days/year that take is not permitted at 80 ML/day or less(proposed rule)	Change in access between existing and proposed rule
Full gauge record (1936 – 2023)	30	163	On average, based on historic data, there were 133 additional days per year where affected licence holders could not take water under applicable licences
Life of the water sharing plan (2012 – 2023)	61	204	On average, there would have been 143 additional days per year where affected licence holders could not have taken water under applicable licences, if the rule was in place in the previous plan

- The proposed rule of 80ML/day would result in licence holders being restricted from taking water for about 45–55% of the year on average
- The existing rule restricts licence holders for about 8–17% of the year on average
- The greatest reductions in access are likely to occur in summer and autumn
- This analysis is only representative of the scale of change for licences that extract water from the Gwydir River.
- Where licences extract water from other creeks and streams within the water source not connected to the Gwydir River, the hydrological relationship between the gauge and these licence locations are unknown. This means that the impact of change can't be quantified.

Moredun Creek Water Source

- We propose to change the access rule in the newly created Copeton Dam Management Zone from No Visible Flow at the pump site to 80ML/day at Bundarra Gauge
- The river gauge at Bundarra is in Moredun Creek Water Source (upstream)
- Rule change aims to:
 - Protect low flows
 - Maintain river connectivity
 - Protect high instream value areas and endangered species like Bell's turtle and eel-tailed catfish
 - Mitigate potential water quality issues by ensuring a minimum flow velocity past the gauge
 - Provide a minimum flow depth to support fish movement
 - Provide benefits to basic landholder rights
 - Improve implementation of the rules and compliance by linking access rules to an active telemetric gauge



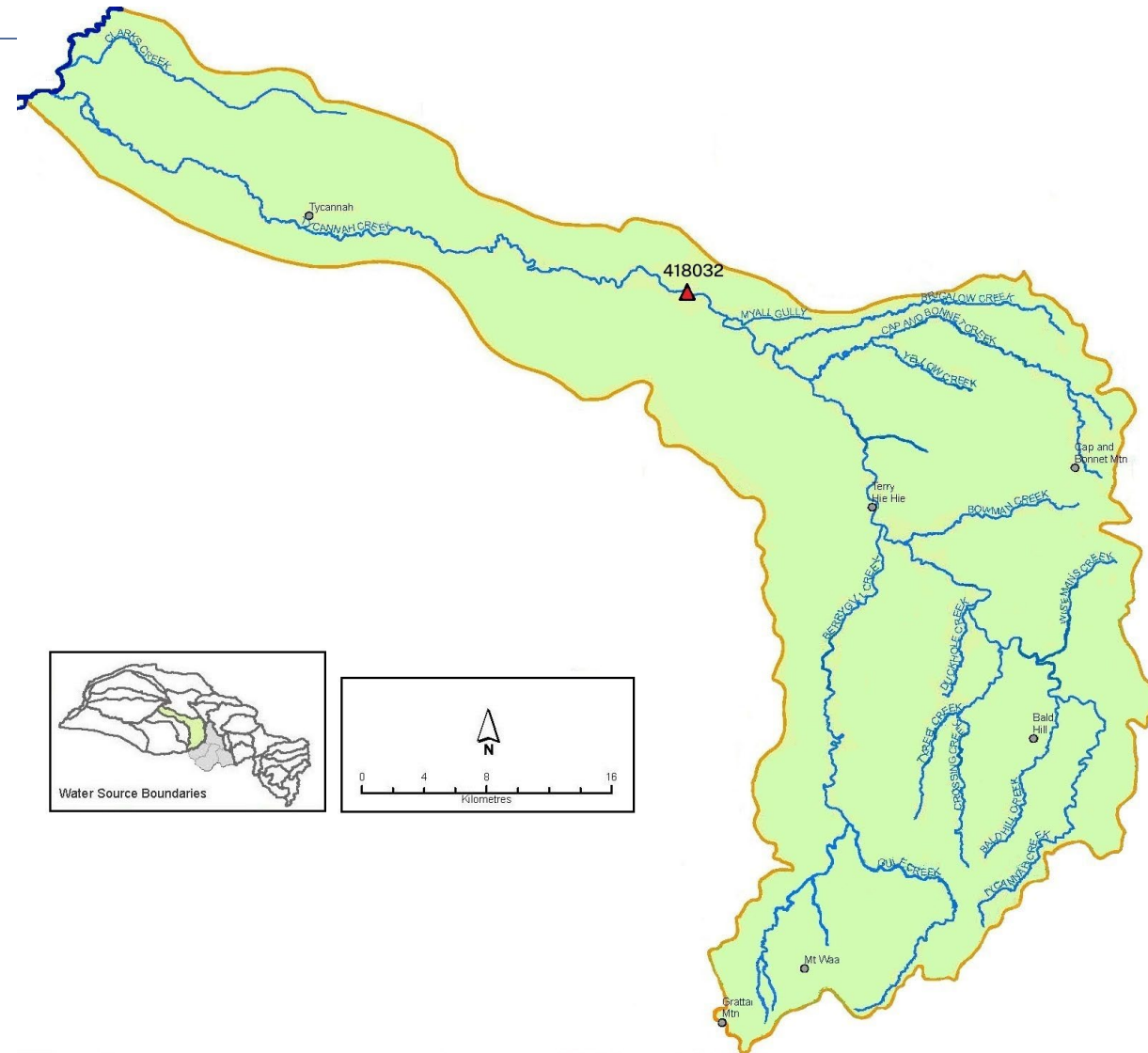
Moredun Creek Water Source

Time period	Average days/year that take is not permitted at no visible flow (existing rule)	Average days/year that take is not permitted at 80/ML/day (proposed rule)	Change in access between existing and proposed rule
Full gauge record (1936–2023)	30	163	On average, based on historic data there were 133 additional days per year where affected licence holders could not take water under applicable licences
Life of the water sharing plan (2012–2023)	61	204	On average, there would have been 143 additional days per year where affected licence holders could not have taken water under applicable licences, if the rule was in place in the previous plan

- The proposed rule of 80ML/day would result in licence holders being restricted from taking water for about 45–55% of the year on average
- The existing rule restricts licence holders for about 8–17% of the year on average
- The greatest reductions in access are likely to occur in summer and autumn
- This analysis is only relevant for licences that extract water from the Gwydir River
- Where licences extract water from other creeks and streams within the water source not connected to the Gwydir River, the hydrological relationship between the gauge and these licence locations are unknown. This means that the impact of change can't be quantified.

Tycannah Creek Water Source

- We propose to change the access rule in Tycannah Creek Water Source from No Visible Flow at the pump site to 2 ML/day at Tycannah Creek at Horseshoe Gauge
- Rule change aims to:
 - Reduce cease to flow periods
 - Support adequate water depths to enable species to travel throughout the water source and river systems more broadly
 - Improve river connectivity and filling of refuge pools
 - Protect high instream value areas of the Lowland Darling Endangered Ecological Community and endangered species like purple-spotted gudgeon and eel-tailed catfish
 - Reduce potential water quality issues by ensuring a minimum flow velocity past the gauge
 - Provide benefits to basic landholder rights
 - Improve implementation of the rules and compliance by linking access rules to an active telemetric gauge



Tycannah Creek Water Source

Time Period	Average days/year that take is not permitted at no visible flow (existing rule)	Average days/year that take is not permitted at 2ML/day (proposed rule)	Change in access between existing and proposed rule
Full gauge record (1971–2023)	80	161	On average, based on historic data, there were 81 additional days per year where affected licence holders cannot take water under applicable licences
Life of the water sharing plan (2012–2023)	117	204	On average, there would have been 87 additional days per year where affected licence holders could not have taken water under applicable licences if the rule was in place in the previous plan

- The proposed rule of 2 ML/day would result in licence holders being restricted from taking water for about 45–55% of the year on average
- The existing rule restricts licence holders for about 22–32% of the year on average
- The greatest reductions in access are likely to occur in spring and summer
- This analysis is only relevant for licences that extract water from Tycannah Creek
- Where licences extract water from other creeks and streams within the water source not connected to Tycannah Creek, the hydrological relationship between the gauge and these licence locations are unknown. This means that the impact of change can't be quantified.

Namoi and Peel

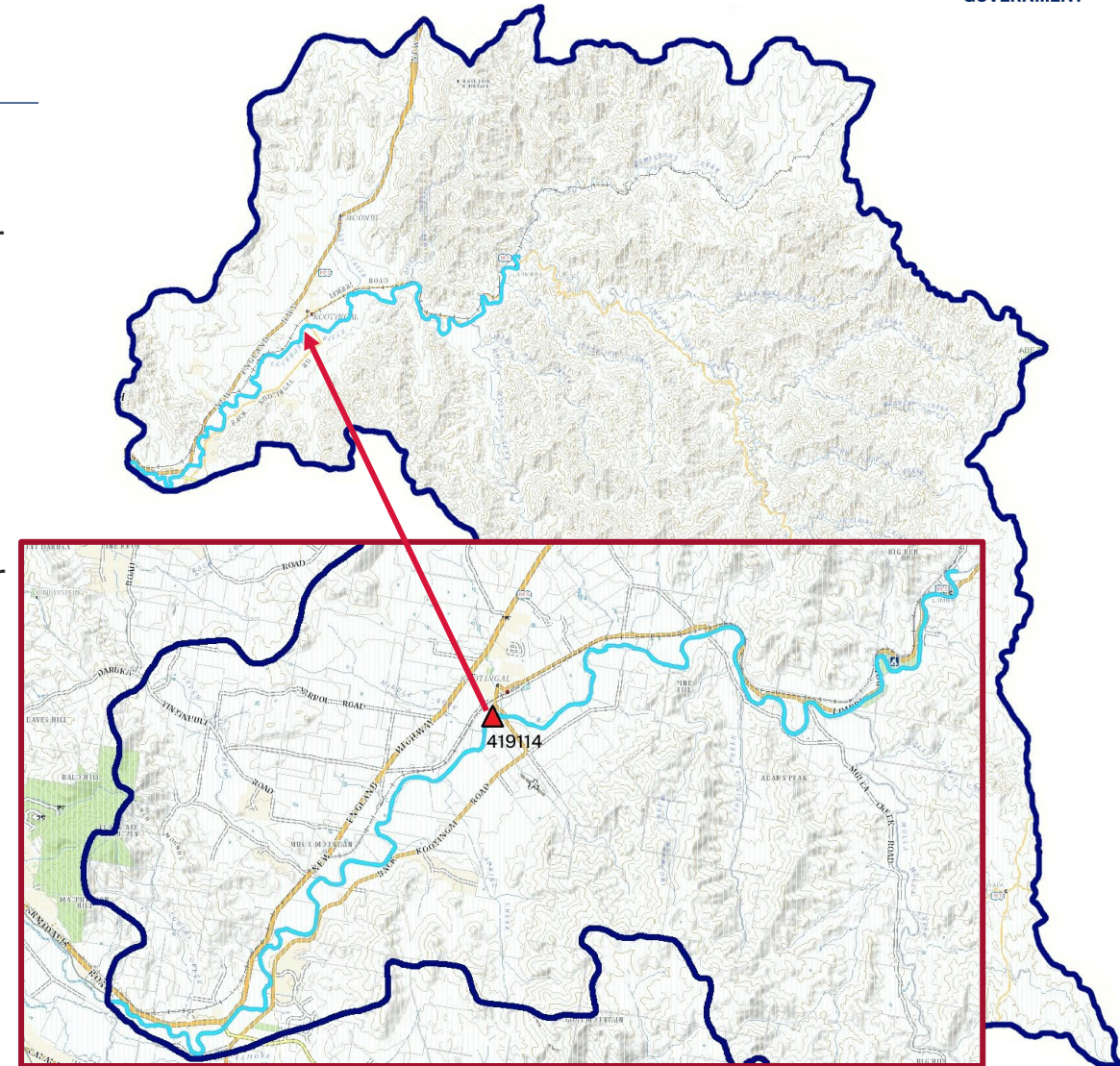
Proposed changes



Cockburn River Water Source

Cockburn River Management Zone

- We propose to change the access rule in Cockburn River Management Zone from 2.5 ML/day on a rising river and 0.3 ML/day on a falling river to 36 ML/day at Kootingal Bridge Weir Gauge
- Rule change aims to:
 - Reduce how often parts of the system stop flowing
 - Support adequate water depths to enable native fish and other aquatic animals to travel throughout the water source and river systems more broadly
 - Improve river connectivity and filling of refuge pools
 - Protect high instream value areas and endangered species like purple-spotted gudgeon, eel-tailed catfish, olive perchlet and tusked frog
 - Reduce potential water quality issues by ensuring a minimum flow velocity past the gauge
 - Provide benefits to basic landholder rights



Cockburn River Water Source

Cockburn River Management Zone

Time period	Average days/year that take is not permitted at 2.5 ML/day or less (existing rule*)	Average days/year that take is not permitted at 36 ML/day or less (proposed rule)	Change in access between existing and proposed rule
Full gauge record (2020–2023)	2	100	On average, based on historic data there were 98 additional days per year where affected licence holders could not take water under applicable licences

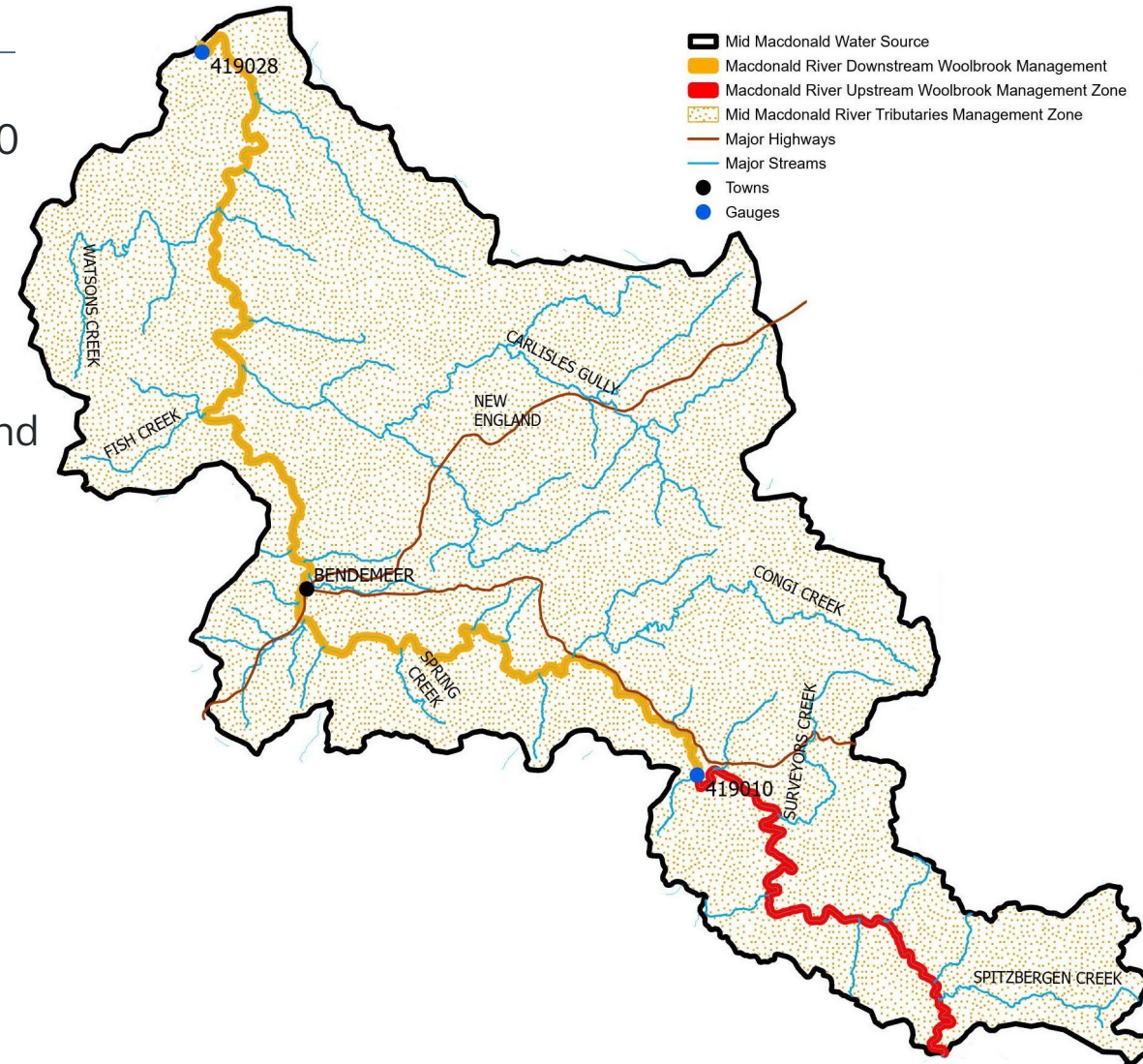
*The stricter component of the 2.5 ML/day of a rising river and 0.3 ML/day on a falling river

- The Kootingal Bridge gauge became operational in 2020 and was linked to access rules at that time
- The proposed rule of 36 ML/day would result in licence holders being restricted from taking water for about 27 % of the year on average
- The existing rule restricts licence holders for about 0.5 % of the year on average
- The greatest reductions in access are likely to occur in summer and spring

Mid Macdonald River Water Source

Macdonald River Upstream Woolbrook Management Zone

- We propose to change the access rule in Macdonald River Upstream Woolbrook Management Zone from 10 ML/day to 60 ML/day at Macdonald River at Woolbrook Gauge
- Rule change aims to:
 - Reduce how often parts of the system stop flowing
 - Support adequate water depths to enable native fish and other aquatic animals to travel throughout the water source and river systems more broadly
 - Improve river connectivity and filling of refuge pools
 - Protect high instream value areas and threatened and endangered species like Murray cod, purple-spotted gudgeon, Bell's turtle, eel-tailed catfish and olive perchlet
 - Reduce potential water quality issues by ensuring a minimum flow velocity past the gauge
 - Provide benefits to basic landholder rights



Mid Macdonald River Water Source

Macdonald River Upstream Woolbrook Management Zone

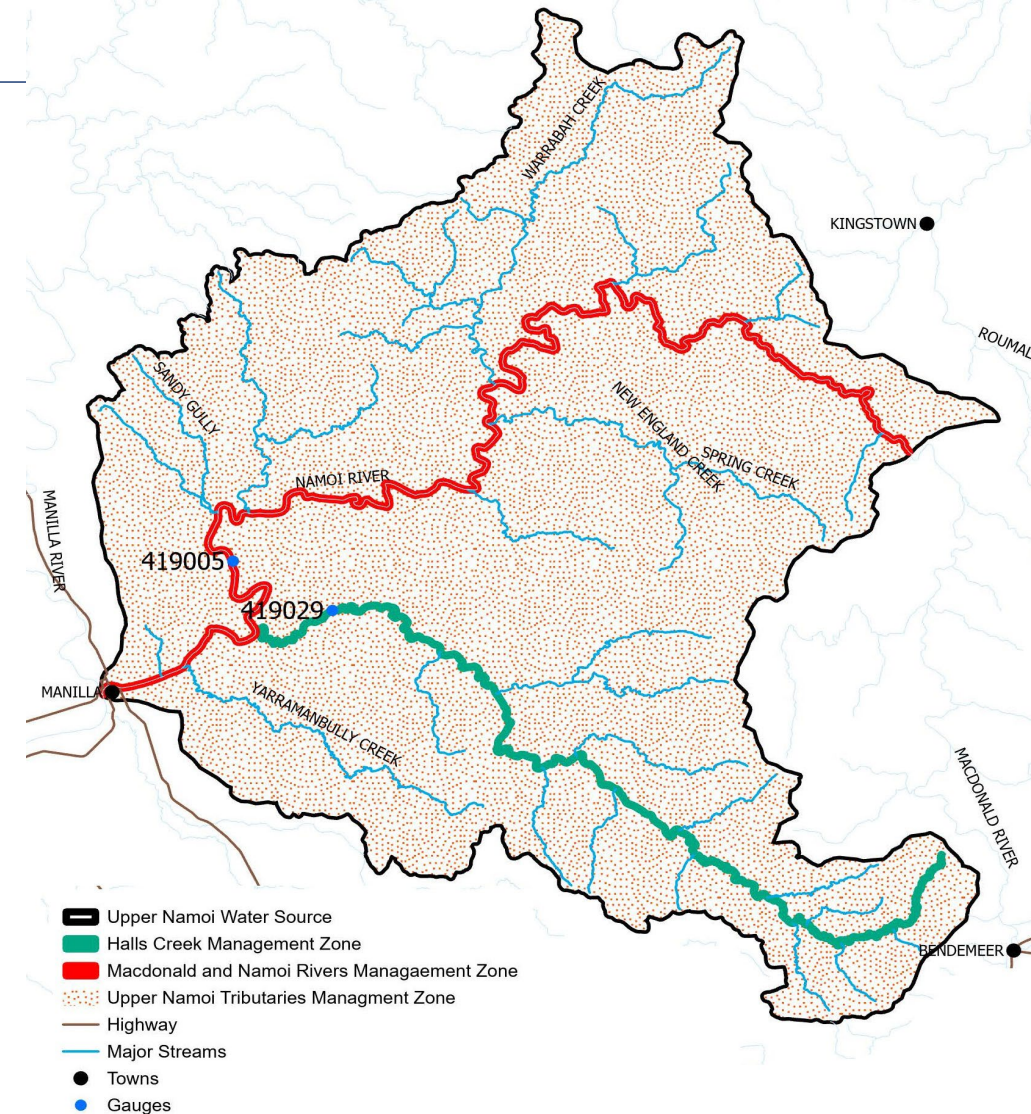
Time period	Average days/year that take is not permitted at 10 ML/day or less (existing rule)	Average days/year that take is not permitted at 60 ML/day or less (proposed rule)	Change in access between existing and proposed rule
Full gauge record (1927–2023)	24	128	On average, based on historic data there were 104 additional days per year where affected licence holders could not take water under applicable licences
Life of the water sharing plan (2012–2023)	66	185	On average, there would have been 119 additional days per year where affected licence holders could not have taken water under applicable licences, if the rule was in place in the previous plan

- The proposed rule of 60 ML/day would result in licence holders being restricted from taking water for about 35–50% of the year on average
- The existing rule restricts licence holders for about 6.5–18% of the year on average
- The greatest reductions in access are likely to occur in summer and autumn

Upper Namoi River Water Source

Macdonald and Namoi Rivers Management Zone

- We propose to change the access rule in Macdonald River Upstream Woolbrook Management Zone from no visible flow at the Manilla weir to 16 ML/day at Namoi River at North Cuerindi Gauge
- Rule change aims to:
 - Reduce how often parts of the system stop flowing
 - Support adequate water depths to enable native fish and other aquatic animals to travel throughout the water source and river systems more broadly
 - Improve river connectivity and filling of refuge pools
 - Protect high instream value areas and threatened and endangered species like Murray cod, tusked frog and eel-tailed catfish
 - Reduce potential water quality issues by ensuring a minimum flow velocity past the gauge
 - Provide benefits to basic landholder rights
 - Improve implementation of the rules and compliance by linking access rules to an active telemetric gauge



Upper Namoi River Water Source

Macdonald and Namoi Rivers Management Zone

Time period	Average days/year that take is not permitted at no visible flow at Manilla Weir (existing rule)	Average days/year that take is not permitted at 1 ML/day or less (pub ex rule)	Average days/year that take is not permitted at 16 ML/day or less (proposed rule)	Change in access between existing and proposed rule
Full gauge record (1915 – 2023)	4.5	9	36	On average, based on historic data there were 31.5 additional days per year where affected licence holders could not take water under applicable licences
Life of the water sharing plan (2012 – 2023)	33	63	91	On average, there would have been 58 additional days per year where affected licence holders could not have taken water under applicable licences, if the rule was in place in the previous plan

- The proposed rule of 16 ML/day would result in licence holders being restricted from taking water for about 10 – 25% of the year on average
- The existing rule restricts licence holders for about 1 – 9 % of the year on average
- The greatest reductions in access are likely to occur in summer and autumn

Maules Creek Water Source

Maules and Horsearm Creeks Management Zone

- We propose to change the access rule in Maules and Horsearm Creeks Management Zone from 1 ML/day to 75 ML/day at Maules Creek at Avoca East Gauge
- Rule change aims to:
 - Reduce how often parts of the system stop flowing
 - Support adequate water depths to enable native fish and other aquatic animals to travel throughout the water source and river systems more broadly
 - Improve river connectivity and filling of refuge pools
 - Protect high instream value areas and endangered species like purple-spotted gudgeon, eel-tailed catfish, olive perchlet and tusked frog
 - Reduce potential water quality issues by ensuring a minimum flow velocity past the gauge
 - Provide benefits to basic landholder rights



Maules Creek Water Source

Maules and Horsearm Creek Management Zone

Time period	Average days/year that take is not permitted at 1 ML/day (existing rule)	Average days/year that take is not permitted at 75 ML/day (proposed rule)	Change in access between existing and proposed rule
Full gauge record (1972 – 2023)	49	297	On average, based on historic data there were 248 additional days per year where affected licence holders could not take water under applicable licences
Life of the water sharing plan (2012 – 2023)	85	338	On average, there would have been 253 additional days per year where affected licence holders could not take water under applicable licences if the proposed rule had been in place during the previous plan

- The proposed rule of 75 ML/day would result in licence holders being restricted from taking water for about 81–93% of the year on average
- The existing rule restricts licence holders for about 13–23 % of the year on average
- The greatest reductions in access are likely to occur in summer and autumn

Macquarie/ Wambuul Bogan

Proposed changes



Lower Bogan River Water Source

- We propose to change the access rule in the Lower Bogan River Water Source from no visible flow at the pump site to 48 ML/day at the Bogan River at Gongolgon Gauge (421023)
- Rule change aims to:
 - Reducing how often parts of the system stop flowing
 - Support adequate water depths to enable aquatic species to travel throughout the water source and river systems more broadly
 - Improve river connectivity and filling of refuge pools
 - Protect high instream value areas of the Lowland Darling River Aquatic Endangered Ecological Community and endangered species like purple-spotted gudgeon and eel-tailed catfish
 - Reduce potential water quality issues by ensuring a minimum flow velocity past the gauge
 - Provide benefits to basic landholder rights
 - Improve implementation of the rules and compliance by linking access rules to an active telemetric gauge



Lower Bogan Water Source

Time Period	Average days/year that take is not permitted at no visible flow (existing rule)	Average days/year that take is not permitted at 5 ML/day (pub ex rule)	Average days/year that take is not permitted at 48 ML/day (proposed rule)	Change in access between existing and proposed rule
Full gauge record (1945–2023)	97	116	187	On average, based on historic data there were 90 additional days per year where affected licence holders could not take water under applicable licences.
Life of the water sharing plan (2012–2023)	153	188	263	On average, there would have been 110 additional days per year where licence holders could have not taken water under applicable licences, if the proposed rule was in place during the previous plan.

- The proposed rule of 48 ML/day would result in affected licence holders being restricted from taking water for about 51-72% of the year on average
- The existing rule restricts licence holders for about 25-30% of the year on average, and the pub ex rule about 32%-51%
- The greatest reductions in access are likely to occur in winter
- This analysis is only relevant for licences that extract water from the Bogan River system
- Where licences extract water from other creeks and streams within the water source not connected to the Bogan River, there is no practical way to estimate the number of days of access under the existing rule, as the hydrological relationship between the gauge and these licence locations are unknown. This means that the impact of change can't be quantified.

Upper Cudgegong River Water Source

Cudgegong River Downstream Management Zone

- We propose to change the access rule in the Cudgegong River Downstream Management Zone from no visible flow at the pump site to 3 ML/day at the Cudgegong River at Rylstone gauge (421903).
- Rule change aims to:
 - Reduce how often parts of the system stop flowing
 - Support adequate water depths to enable aquatic species to travel throughout the water source and river systems more broadly
 - Improve river connectivity and filling of refuge pools
 - Protect high instream value areas and endangered species like boorolong frog, golden bell frog, purple-spotted gudgeon and eel-tailed catfish
 - Reduce potential water quality issues by ensuring a minimum flow velocity past the gauge
 - Provide benefits to basic landholder rights
 - Improve implementation of the rules and compliance by linking access rules to an active telemetric gauge



Upper Cudgegong River Water Source

Cudgegong River Downstream Management Zone

Time period	Average days/year that take is not permitted at no visible flow (existing rule)	Average days/year that take is not permitted at 3 ML/day (proposed rule)	Change in access between existing and proposed rule
Full gauge record (2017–2023)	47	116	On average, based on historic data there were 69 additional days per year where affected licence holders cannot take water under applicable licences

- The proposed rule of 3 ML/day would result in licence holders being restricted from taking water for about 32 % of the year on average,
- The existing rule restricts licence holders for about 13 % of the year on average,
- The greatest reductions in access are likely to occur in winter and spring,
- This analysis is only relevant for licences that extract water from the Cudgegong River.
- Where licences extract water from other creeks and streams within the water source not connected to the Cudgegong River, there is no practical way to estimate the number of days of access under the existing or proposed rule, as the hydrological relationship between the gauge and these licence locations are unknown. This means that the impact of change can't be quantified.



Lachlan

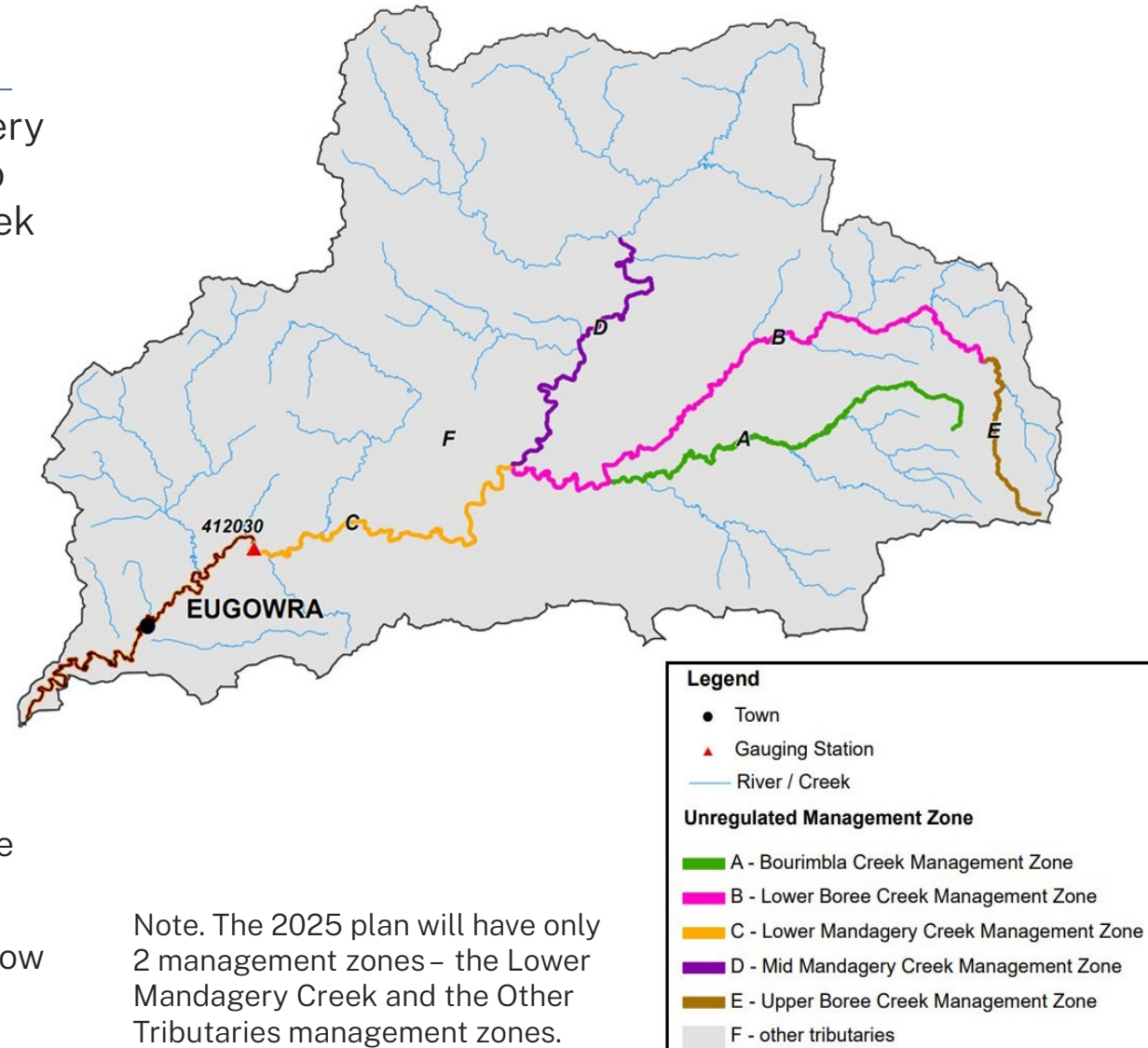
Proposed changes

Image: Jess Murphy/DCCCEW

Mandagery Creek Water Source

Lower Mandagery Creek Management Zone

- We propose to change the access rule in the Lower Mandagery Creek Management Zone from the currently implemented no visible flow at the pump site to 10 ML/day at Mandagery Creek upstream of Eugowra Gauge with a 2-day 'first flush'
- A 2-day first flush enables more equitable sharing of flows between licences located up- and downstream of the gauge
- Rule change aims to:
 - Reduce cease to flow periods
 - Support adequate water depths to enable species to travel throughout the water source and river systems more broadly
 - Improve river connectivity and filling of refuge pools
 - Protect high instream value areas of the Lower Lachlan River Endangered Ecological Community and endangered species like purple-spotted gudgeon and eel-tailed catfish
 - Reduce potential water quality issues by ensuring a minimum flow velocity past the gauge
 - Provide benefits to basic landholder rights



Mandagery Creek Water Source

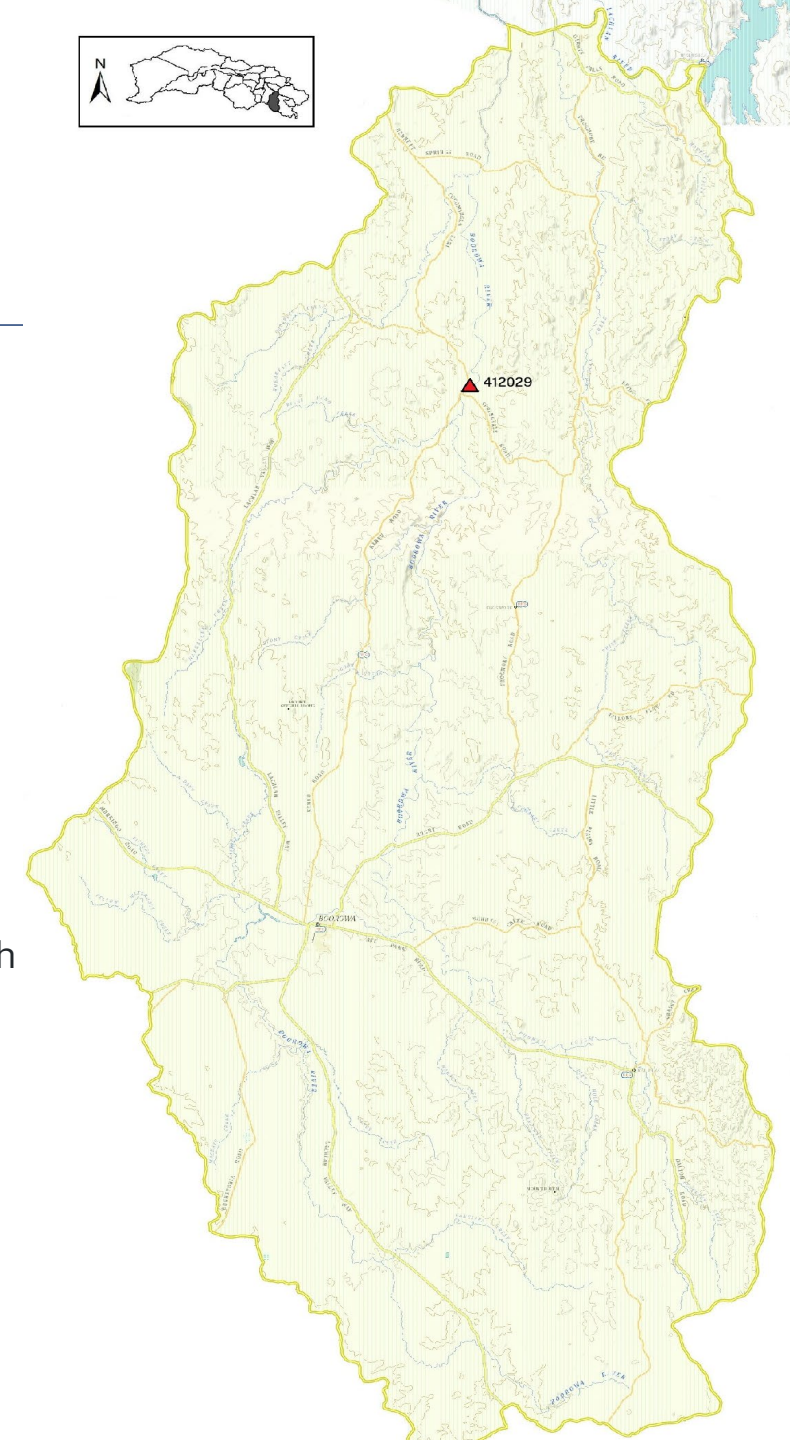
Lower Mandagery Creek Management Zone

Time Period	Average days/year that take is not permitted at 0 ML/day (existing rule)	Average days/year that take is not permitted at 2 ML/day (pub ex rule)	Average days/year that take is not permitted at 10 ML/day (proposed rule ex 2-day first flush)	Change in access between existing and proposed rule
Full gauge record (1938 – 2023)	48	68	103	On average, based on historic data there were a minimum of 103 additional days per year where affected licence holders could not take water under applicable licences
Life of the water sharing plan (2012 – 2023)	70	85	133	On average, there would have been 63 additional days per year where affected licence holders could not have taken water under applicable licences if the rule was in place in the previous plan

- The proposed rule of 10 ML/day would result in licence holders being restricted from taking water for about 28 – 36% of the year on average
- The existing rule restricts licence holders for about 13 – 19% of the year on average
- The greatest reductions in access are likely to occur in summer and autumn
- The first flush would provide greater equity for access between licence holder upstream and downstream of the gauge

Boorowa River and Hovells Creek Water Source

- We propose to change the access rule in Boorowa River and Hovells Creek Water Source from 0 ML/day to 6 ML/day at Boorowa River at Prossers Crossing Gauge
- Rule change aims to:
 - Reduce cease to flow periods
 - Support adequate water depths to enable species to travel throughout the water source and river systems more broadly
 - Improve river connectivity and filling of refuge pools
 - Protect high instream value areas of the Lowland Darling Endangered Ecological Community and endangered species like purple-spotted gudgeon and eel-tailed catfish
 - Reduce potential water quality issues by ensuring a minimum flow velocity past the gauge
 - Provide benefits to basic landholder rights



Boorowa River and Hovells Creek Water Source

Time Period	Average days/year that take is not permitted at 0 ML/day (existing rule)	Average days/year that take is not permitted at 6 ML/day (proposed rule)	Change in access between existing and proposed rule
Full gauge record (1938 – 2023)	11	67	On average, based on historic data here were 56 additional days per year where affected licence holders could not take water under applicable licences
Life of the water sharing plan (2012 – 2023)	20	104	On average, there would have been 84 additional days per year where affected licence holders could not have taken water under applicable licences if the rule was in place in the previous plan

- The proposed rule of 6 ML/day would result in licence holders being restricted from taking water for about 18 – 28% of the year on average and,
- The existing rule restricts licence holders for about 3 – 5.5% of the year on average.
- The greatest reductions in access are likely to occur in summer and autumn,
- This analysis is only relevant for licences that extract water from the Boorowa River.
- Where licences extract water from other creeks and streams within the water source not connected to the Boorowa River, there is no practical way to estimate the number of days of access under the existing or proposed rule, as the hydrological relationship between the gauge and these licence locations are unknown. This means that the impact of change can't be quantified.

Questions

Public exhibition and submission information



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- We would like to hear from you about **what the proposed changes would mean for you**
 - Public exhibition is open between 4 September and 8 October 2025
 - Submissions can be completed by using the online submission form from the DCCEEW Water website (water.nsw.gov.au/cease-to-pump)
 - For help making a submission, email us at water.enquiries@dcceew.nsw.gov.au
 - Closing date for receipt of submissions is 11:59 pm Wednesday 8 October 2025.
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Thank you for joining us

Tell us how we went – scan this QR code or [click here](#)

