

Reconnecting River Country Program's Murrumbidgee Project – Phase 1 benefits



Context and purpose

The Reconnecting River Country Program's Murrumbidgee Project is a key initiative under the Murray–Darling Basin Plan (Basin Plan). It's designed to improve river system health through enhanced connectivity between rivers, wetlands and floodplains.

The project seeks to secure an environmental flow corridor by December 2031 (contingent on further Australian Government funding and continuation of the Basin Plan). The environmental flow corridor is an area along the river that allows the flow of water to connect to wetlands and floodplains, which is crucial for river health.

The project is being delivered in 2 phases, with phase 1 to align with and maximise progress within existing Basin Plan timeframes.

Phase 1 from Darlington Point to Balranald seeks to support environmental flows up to 32,000ML/day – the current limit under the Murrumbidgee Water Sharing Plan after December 2026, if all necessary landholder agreements are secured and subject to operational readiness. It also lays the foundation for Phase 2, which will deliver the full benefits of the project.

Phase 1: enabling and foundational outcomes

Phase 1 establishes the foundation for full project implementation. These foundational actions will enable future success and provide stand-alone environmental, cultural and community benefits, including:

- negotiating easement agreements with the most affected landholders to secure up to 40% of the flow corridor
- establishing legislative and regulatory environment, including the Landholder Negotiation Scheme Regulation, updating river operator procedures and upgrading the existing flow notification system
- working with First Nations communities to deliver enabling activities and cultural values monitoring
- scoping public mitigation works
- progressing public infrastructure works such as raising the height of Mundowry Lane near Collingullie and replacing Mundarlo Bridge near Gundagai to maintain community access during higher environmental flows.

Environmental and community benefits of Phase 1

Subject to securing all necessary landholder agreements and operational readiness, Phase 1 seeks to support environmental flows up to 32,000ML/day guided by the Murrumbidgee Long-Term Watering Plan, after December 2026.

While full corridor delivery is required to realise the maximum extent of benefits, partial corridor delivery, along with implementation of policy and regulatory changes seeks to support meaningful environmental and community outcomes including:

- **wetland connectivity** – improved ecosystem function with more frequent connection to wetlands, lagoons and anabranches by up to 119% compared to base case (22,000ML/day)
- **native fish populations** – supporting a projected 7% increase in adult golden perch numbers across the Murrumbidgee
- **waterbird habitat** – improving breeding and foraging opportunities, especially during dry periods and expanded habitat availability across floodplain wetlands
- **vegetation health** – up to 78% increase in ‘good’ or ‘moderate’ condition of river red gum forests and woodlands during dry periods
- **ecosystem productivity** – increased food availability for aquatic organisms through improved floodplain connectivity
- **wetland fauna** – improved breeding for frogs, turtles, and other fauna with up to 54% increase in inundated area compared to current base case (22,000ML/day)
- **First Nations participation** – strengthened involvement in environmental water planning and cultural values monitoring
- **public transport resilience and safety (critical infrastructure)** – upgrades to Mundowry Lane and Mundarlo Bridge will prevent access disruptions currently caused when high flows overtop this infrastructure. Long detours (up to 120km) will be avoided, and safety improved, leading to more reliable access for local and regional communities
- **agricultural production** – inundation events may yield productivity benefits, pasture growth and nutrient input.



Murrumbidgee Wetlands, Yanga National Park
Credit: Ain Raadik/DCCEEW

Key summary

Phase 1 of the Murrumbidgee Project delivers critical enabling infrastructure (Mundarlo Bridge and Mundowry Lane) to improve community transport access during higher environmental flows and remove key transport constraints that currently cause closures, long detours, and reduced access. These upgrades will improve safety, reduce travel times, and strengthen the resilience of the local road network.

Phase 1 will also secure early environmental benefits within current flow limits while maintaining flexibility for future delivery. Although full benefits depend on Phase 2, Phase 1 provides a strong foundation and early gains that ensure progress within existing timeframes. It also supports First Nations and community outcomes, and positions the project for future success, pending broader Murray-Darling Basin Plan decisions.

Find out more

To find out 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.



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