

Community communication strategy

SSI Billabong Creek regulators construction and commissioning

March 2026



Acknowledgement of Country

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and pays respect to Elders past, present and future.

We recognise Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to place and their rich contribution to society.

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

Community communication strategy

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1 Introduction

The Water Group in the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water will replace 2 weirs along Billabong Creek at Hartwood and Wanganella, within the Yanco Creek system in the Riverina region of southern NSW. The aim of upgrading the existing weirs with new, modern regulators is to improve water efficiency and enhance environmental outcomes in the region.

The new regulators will improve the efficiency of water management in Billabong Creek by improving:

- the ability to deliver the right amount of environmental and consumptive (town and irrigation) water to the right place at the right time
- the passage of native fish through the system.

The new regulators are:

- part of the Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism (SDLAM) Acceleration Program's Yanco Creek Modernisation Project
- the largest infrastructure components of the SDLAM Acceleration Program
- classified as State Significant Infrastructure.

The project supports efforts to meet water efficiency targets set by the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and is designed to achieve similar or improved environmental outcomes for rivers, wetlands and wildlife using less water.

2 Purpose and objectives

The Water Group is committed to ensuring all affected and interested stakeholders are informed and engaged throughout the construction and commissioning of the Billabong Creek Regulators, in accordance with the Billabong Creek Environmental Water Regulators Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Conditions of Approval (CoA). The approach reinforces the Water Group's commitment to the NSW Government's open government principles of transparency, participation, accountability and innovation and ensures compliance with requirements set out by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI).

The purpose of this strategy is to outline the Water Group's communication and engagement approach, messaging and activities to meet the requirements of the CoA by:

- ensuring relevant information about the project and the conditions are publicly available
- providing mechanisms to facilitate 2-way communication with stakeholders during construction and commissioning

- ensuring adjoining landholders, First Nations people, Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs), Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs), local councils and directly impacted community members are notified in advance of upcoming works
- ensuring accurate, timely and easily understood information is regularly distributed, including accessible formats considering the community demographics
- providing clear procedures for responding to enquiries, managing feedback and resolving issues or disputes that may arise in relation to construction activities
- ensuring engagement roles, responsibilities and response mechanisms are clearly defined and implemented across the project team and delivery partners.

Stakeholder engagement will include in-person meetings, small group discussions, community forums and digital engagements. Tailored communication will reach priority groups, including First Nations communities and those affected by program delivery. Activities will align with International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) principles and be timed to coincide with key program milestones. The program will continue to respond to phone enquiries, Questions on Notice and online queries, supporting the Water Group’s commitment to delivering the Billabong Creek Regulators project responsibly and transparently.

3 Compliance requirements and scope of document

This section incorporates the Community Communication Strategy (CCS) requirements and outlines the communication and engagement activities for the pre-construction, construction and commissioning phases of the project.

The practical completion of construction of the regulators is scheduled for December 2026, and the regulators will be commissioned and handed over to the future asset owner, WaterNSW, in early 2027. A new CCS, including planning for a new web page, will be developed by WaterNSW for the ongoing operation of the regulators post-handover.

Table 1 and 2 below outline the CoA and commitments in the Request for Information (RFI) Report regarding community communication and engagement for the construction and commissioning of the project, cross referenced with the actions taken to meet each condition.

Table 1: Conditions of approval regarding community communication and engagement for the construction and commissioning of the project.

Condition	Condition details	Action
B1	<p>A Community Communication Strategy must be prepared to provide mechanisms to facilitate communication about construction and operation of the SSI with relevant stakeholders including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the community (including adjoining affected landowners and businesses, and others directly impacted by the regulators) • Aboriginal people, Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) and LALCs • the relevant councils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Section 6: Stakeholder summary • See Section 6.3: Design consultation. • See Section 7: Demographic profile • See Section 12: Action plan

Condition	Condition details	Action
B2	<p>The Community Communication Strategy must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify people, organisations, councils to be consulted during the design and work phases of the SSI; • identify details of the community and its demographics; • identify timing of consultation; • set out procedures and mechanisms for the regular distribution of accessible information including to LOTE and CALD and vulnerable communities about or relevant to the SSI; • detail the measures for advising the community and relevant councils in advance of upcoming construction • set out procedures and mechanisms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – through which the community can discuss or provide feedback to the Proponent; – through which the Proponent will respond to enquiries or feedback from stakeholders; – to resolve any issues and mediate any disputes that may arise in relation to the environmental management and delivery of the SSI; – address who will engage with the relevant stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Section 6: Stakeholder summary (see Section 6.3 for discussion relating to design consultation) • See Section 7: Demographic profile • See Section 9: Complaints management system

Condition	Condition details	Action
B3	<p>Work for the purposes of the SSI must not commence until the Community Communication Strategy has been approved by the Planning Secretary. The Planning Secretary's approval of the Community Communication Strategy must be sought no later than one month before the commencement of Work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While it is noted the CCS needs to be approved 1 month before the commencement of work, the Water Group has lodged a request with DPHI to amend this timeframe to one week. • A decision on this request is pending. The Water Group commits to complying with the agreed timeframe.
B4	<p>The Community Communication Strategy, as approved by the Planning Secretary, must be implemented for the duration of Work and for 12 months following the completion of construction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Section 9.5: Continuity of content and complaints / enquiries • See Section 12: Action plan
B5	<p>A Complaints Management System must be prepared and implemented before the commencement of any Work and maintained for the duration of Work and for a minimum for 12 months following completion of construction of the SSI.</p> <p>Note: In the situation where there are different entities constructing and operating the SSI, continuity of a CCS to the Complaints Management System must be maintained.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Section 9: Complaints management system • See Section 9.5: Continuity of content and complaints / enquiries

Condition	Condition details	Action
B6	<p>The following information must be available to facilitate community enquiries and manage complaints one month before the commencement of Work and for 12 months following the completion of construction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a telephone number for the registration of complaints and enquiries about the SSI; • a postal address to which written complaints and enquires may be sent; • an email address to which electronic complaints and enquiries may be transmitted; and • a mediation system for complaints unable to be resolved. <p>This information must be accessible to all in the community regardless of age, ethnicity, disability or literacy level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Section 9: Complaints management system • See Section 9.4: Mediation process • See Section 9.5: Continuity of content and complaints / enquiries
B7	<p>A Complaints Register must be maintained recording information on all complaints received about the SSI during the carrying out of any Work and for a minimum of 12 months following the completion of construction. The Complaints Register must record the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number of complaints received; • the date and time of the complaint; • the method by which the complaint was made; • any personal details of the complainant which were provided by the complainant or, if no such details were provided, a note to that effect; • the nature of the complaint, including the issues raised; • means by which the complaint was addressed and whether resolution was reached, with or without mediation; and • if no action was taken, the reason(s) why no action was taken. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Section 9: Complaints management system

Condition	Condition details	Action
B8	<p>Complainants must be advised of the following information before, or as soon as practicable after, providing personal information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Complaints Register may be forwarded to government agencies, including the Department and its representatives (including independent appointments such as the Environment Representative (ER), to allow them to undertake their regulatory duties; • by providing personal information, the complainant authorises the Proponent to provide that information to government agencies; • the supply of personal information by the complainant is voluntary; and • the complainant has the right to contact government agencies to access personal information held about them and to correct or amend that information (Collection Statement). <p>The Collection Statement must be included on the Proponent's or SSI's website to make prospective complainants aware of their rights under the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW). For any complaints made in person, the complainant must be made aware of the Collection Statement.</p> <p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For any complaints made in person, the complainant must be made aware of the Collection Statement. <p>Should a complainant disagree with the collection statement, a note to that effect must be recorded in the Complaints Register.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Section 9: Complaints management system
B9	<p>The Complaints Register must be provided to the Planning Secretary upon request, within the timeframe stated in the request.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Section 9: Complaints management system

Condition	Condition details	Action
B10	<p>A website or webpage providing information in relation to the SSI must be established before commencement of Work and be maintained for the duration of construction, and for a minimum of 10 years following the completion of construction or unless an alternative timeframe is agreed by the Planning Secretary. The following up-to-date information (excluding confidential, personal, commercial information or any other information that the Planning Secretary has approved to be excluded) must be published before the relevant work commences and maintained on the website or dedicated pages including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information on the current implementation status of the SSI; • a copy of the documents listed in Condition A1, and any documentation relating to any modifications made to the SSI or the terms of this approval; • a copy of this approval in its original form, a current consolidated copy of this approval (that is, including any approved modifications to its terms), and copies of any approval granted by the Minister to a modification of the terms of this approval; • a copy of each statutory approval, licence or permit required and obtained in relation to the SSI; • a copy of the current version of each document required under the terms of this approval; and • a copy of the audit reports required under this approval. <p>Where the information / document relates to a particular Work or is required to be implemented, it must be published before the commencement of the relevant Work to which it relates or before its implementation.</p> <p>All information required in this condition must be provided on the Proponent's website, ordered in a logical sequence, easy to navigate, searchable and with documents titles clearly presented.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Section 11: SSI webpage • See Section 12: Action plan

Condition	Condition details	Action
<p>B10 continued</p>	<p>Website notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The intention of this condition is to increase transparency and for information/ documents required as part of the approval to be provided proactively and publicly in an easily accessible manner. Where information is excepted by this condition, it is intended that these documents are provided in their redacted form. 2. The Planning Secretary may instruct the Proponent to finalise and upload any report or documents to the Project's website in accordance with Condition A4. 3. The publishing of documents should occur a minimum of a week before the relevant Work / activity is going to commence. 4. In determining what information should be published under this condition, the proponent should have regard to the principles in Division 2 of Part 2 of the Government Information (Public Access) Act, 2009. <p>Documents should be named to be consistent with the conditions of approval where possible. The name should also give an overall impression of what the document is about. The names should be simple and concise (no more than 50 characters) without any unnecessary punctuation or under scoring in the title.</p>	<p>See Section 11: SSI webpage</p> <p>See Section 12: Action plan</p>
<p>B11</p>	<p>Where the agreement of the Planning Secretary is sought to cease providing information via a website or webpage in accordance with Condition B10, the Proponent must demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • operational compliance through independent audits completed in accordance with Condition A30(c); • how any ongoing monitoring programs will be made publicly available; and • how the public can request access to information that will no longer be available through a website or webpage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Section 9.4: Continuity of complaints / enquiries

Table 2: Water Group’s community communication and engagement commitments in the RFI Report for the Billabong Creek EIS – construction and commissioning phase.

	Condition	Action
<p>LU2</p>	<p>The design and construction planning would continue to be refined to minimise potential impacts on land uses and properties as far as reasonably practicable. Consultation with landholders would be ongoing to identify opportunities to minimise impacts on farming operations where practicable. Property owners and occupants would be consulted in accordance with the communication management plan for the proposal, to ensure that owners/occupants are informed about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the timing and scope of activities in their area • any potential property impacts/changes, particularly in relation to potential impacts on access, services, or farm operational arrangements • activities that have the potential to impact on livestock. <p>Feasible and reasonable property-specific measures would be identified in consultation with landholders, and implemented during construction, where construction is located on or immediately adjacent to private properties and has the potential to affect farm operational arrangements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Section 10: Working out of hours/noise exceedance consultation • See Section 12: Action plan
<p>NV10</p>	<p>Where site establishment works at site access tracks (vegetation clearing or upgrade of tracks) would occur within 700 metres of residences, the affected residences would be notified a minimum of 7 days prior to work including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a description of the works to be undertaken including its timing and duration • the expected noise levels during the works • a contact number for further information or for complaints. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Section 12: Action plan

Condition	Action
<p>S1</p>	<p>NSW DCCEEW will continue to manage and deliver the Community Communication Strategy (CCS) in the lead up to and during construction of the proposal. This will help to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the community and stakeholders have a high level of awareness of all processes and activities • accurate and accessible information is made available • a timely response is given to issues and concerns raised by the community • feedback from the community is encouraged and opportunities for input are provided.

Condition	Action
<p>S2</p> <p>A communication management plan will be developed by the primary contractor in accordance with the CCS and implemented to define the specific requirements for engagement during delivery of the proposal. A communication management plan will be developed to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> landowners/landholders, community members and businesses affected by construction activities (e.g. property impacts, cultural heritage impacts, access changes, noise, vibration, dust) are notified in a timely manner about impacts accurate and accessible information is made available through multiple channels (e.g. printed fact sheets and notification letters, email, phone calls, online) feedback from the community is encouraged opportunities for input are provided where appropriate. <p>The communication management plan will define the requirements for the complaints management system to be implemented throughout the duration of the proposal, including 24-hour, seven days a week phone line, postal and email address for written enquiries, and publication of contact details.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See Section 9: Complaints management system See Section 10: Working out of hours/noise exceedance consultation See Section 12: Action plan

Condition	Action
<p>S3</p> <p>NSW DCCEEW will continue to engage with local Aboriginal stakeholders about the proposal. NSW DCCEEW will continue to manage and deliver tailored and targeted engagement with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities and stakeholders in accordance with the CCS.</p> <p>This will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide mechanisms for Aboriginal people and communities to provide input to the proposal • draw upon perspectives, knowledge, relationships, cultural practices, and wisdoms of Aboriginal stakeholders to minimise potential disruptions from the proposal • demonstrate how input provided is incorporated into decision making and planning for the proposal • identify employment, training, and procurement opportunities associated with the proposal • protect and mitigate harm of Aboriginal cultural heritage and spiritual values within the influence of the proposal scope. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Section 12: Action plan • Addressed in ACHA Report
<p>AQ2</p> <p>Local residents will be advised of hours of operation and duration of work and supplied with a contact name and number for queries regarding air quality.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Section 9: Complaints management system • See Section 10: Working out of hours/noise exceedance consultation • See Section 12: Action plan

4 Key project milestones

Table 3 below highlights the major milestones for the construction and commissioning of the Billabong Creek regulators, providing a clear timeline for key communication and engagement activities.

Table 3: Project milestones for the construction and commissioning of the Billabong Creek regulators

Milestone	Details	Month/year
Construction contract award	Construction contractor announced	Dec 25
EIS determination	EIS approved by DPHI	Feb 26
Site establishment	Including vegetation clearance, access track upgrades, environmental requirements, i.e. exclusion area fencing, compound site set up	Mar 26
In-stream pre-construction works	Installation of sediment curtains and temporary sheet pile coffer dams	Mar 26
Construction of the regulators and fishways	Main construction works, includes relocation of temporary coffer dams to other side of creek	Apr-Dec 26
Utility services construction	New powerlines installed	Apr-Jul 26
Commissioning and handover	Likely to be staged over time	Jan-Mar 27
Full demolition of existing weirs	Undertaken when new regulators completed	Feb 27

5 Risk assessment

Table 4 below identifies the potential communication and engagement risks during the construction and commissioning of the Billabong Creek regulators and outlines strategies to mitigate these risks.

Table 4: Water Group’s identified communication and engagement risks and mitigations for the construction and commissioning of the Billabong Creek regulators.

Risk	Level	Mitigation	Responsibility
Delays in construction/ traffic notifications going out to landholders and/or wider community	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development and implementation of a detailed community communication strategy. Ensure all landholders and the wider community receive traffic and construction updates well in advance of impacts occurring. This could be through email, SMS, social media, or local noticeboards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> C&E Manager Project Manager Contractor
Delays in landholders executing agreements	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure timely responses to landowner queries or concerns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> C&E Manager Project Manager Project Director
Construction delays eroding confidence the decision making is sound, public funds are being well managed and project benefits will be delivered.	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development and implementation of a detailed community communication strategy. In the event of significant delays, maintain regular communication and engagement with clear and consistent messaging to keep community and stakeholders informed of reasoning and revised timeframes for project delivery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> C&E Manager Project Manager

Risk	Level	Mitigation	Responsibility
Works interrupting operation of business for landholders/communities	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely distribution of construction notifications to affected landholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C&E Manager • Project Manager • Contractor
Noise impacting landholders, community and businesses	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of noise mitigation measures in the CEMP and relevant subplans. • Development and implementation of a detailed community communication strategy. • At least 7 days' notice provided to affected stakeholders ahead of impacts. • Negotiated agreements for landowners potentially impacted by out of hours works. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C&E Manager • Environmental lead • Project Manager • Contractor
Dust, vibration and traffic management impacting landholders, community and businesses	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of dust, noise and traffic mitigation measures in the CEMP and relevant subplans. • Development and implementation of a detailed community communication strategy. • At least 7 days' notice provided to affected stakeholders ahead of impacts. • 1800 number, email and mailing address provided for complaint management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental lead • Project Manager • Contractor • C&E Manager

Risk	Level	Mitigation	Responsibility
Landholder / key stakeholder concerns regarding the ongoing operations and maintenance of the assets, leading to lack of public trust in delivering project benefits	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct stakeholder engagement targeting concerns. • Planned engagement opportunities on Water Sharing Plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C&E Manager • Project Manager
Lack of community awareness and understanding of the project deliverables, timeline and benefits	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and implementation of a detailed community communication strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C&E Manager
Delays in project timelines due to Sorry Business or other cultural obligations impacting the availability of First Nations community members, stakeholders, or staff	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing engagement with relevant First Nations communities to understand cultural protocols and potential periods of Sorry Business. • Build flexibility into project plans and consultation timelines. • Maintain respectful, ongoing communication and provide culturally appropriate support to affected individuals as needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations Engagement Manager
Failure to effectively communicate and engage with First Nations stakeholders regarding the identification of Ancestral remains or cultural artefacts, resulting in reputational damage and delays in project delivery	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build flexibility into project plans and consultation timelines. • Maintain respectful, ongoing communication and provide culturally appropriate support to affected individuals as needed. • Follow approved unexpected heritage finds protocols. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations Engagement Manager • Project Manager • Contractor

6 Stakeholder summary

Stakeholders have been identified through ongoing engagement activities for the project over a 3 to 4-year period, including direct consultations, community meetings, feedback from advisory groups, desktop analysis and analysis of previous project interactions. Understanding stakeholder issues and opportunities is critical to shaping effective communication strategies, managing any risks and to building public trust. By thoroughly mapping stakeholders and assessing the known issues and concerns, the Water Group can ensure transparent, responsive communication and engagement to support successful delivery.

6.1 Known issues

Known issues include:

- negative sentiment towards other programs in the region impacting perceptions of the project stakeholder confusion concerning the Landholder Negotiation Scheme and whether it will apply to project
 - noise, vibration, dust and truck traffic could impact landholders, businesses and community
 - potential construction delays could lead to dissatisfaction among stakeholders and the community
 - cumulation of impacts from other adjacent works packages under the Yanco Creek Modernisation Project, namely Wanganella Swamp works near Wanganella village and Forest Creek return regulator works near Conargo
 - need for agreement on new operating plan for the Yanco Creek system, to be developed under the Water Sharing Plan process.
-

6.2 Known opportunities

Known opportunities include:

- showcasing the significant progress the NSW Government is making towards meeting its commitments under the Murray Darling Basin Plan
- showcasing the environmental outcomes and benefits of the project (i.e. improved fish passage)
- showcasing improvements of the project to water management in the Yanco Creek system
- leveraging visual storytelling tools such as photos, videos, or drone footage to capture and share visual updates highlighting milestone on-ground activity
- the ability to conduct site visits to show progress first-hand to key stakeholders
- highlighting stimulus to local jobs and local.

6.3 Stakeholder consultation during the design phase

Detailed design for the project is complete. A design focus group was formed consisting of representatives from WaterNSW, Aboriginal organisations, DPIRD Fisheries and selected members from the Yanco Stakeholder Advisory Group (YSAG). The design focus group no longer meet regularly due to completion of the design – however would be re-convened if major changes to the design are required.

6.4 Key stakeholder breakdown

Table 5 below provides an overview of the key stakeholders/stakeholder groups to be targeted through communications and engagement activities during construction.

Table 5: List of key stakeholders to be targeted during the construction and commissioning of the Billabong Creek regulators.

Category	Stakeholder	Relationship
Minister/s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rose Jackson, MLC (Minister for Water) Senator Murray Watt (Federal Minister for the Environment and Water) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Director
Local MPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helen Dalton, MP (State Member for Murray) Federal Member for Farrer (TBC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Director C&E Manager
Local council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edward River Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Manager Engagement lead
Landholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 directly impacted landholders across the project Several indirectly impacted landholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Manager Landholder engagement lead
Local businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wanganella Caravan Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement lead
General public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wanganella community (61 residents) Conargo community (117 residents) <p><i>See Section 7 below for the community and demographic profile.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement lead Project Manager

Category	Stakeholder	Relationship
Future asset owner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WaterNSW 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Director C&E Manager Project Manager
Government agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NSW DPHI NSW Local Land Services Murray Darling Basin Authority Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water NSW DCCEEW – Water Group NSW DCCEEW - CPHR Group DPIRD Fisheries NSW Transport for NSW Crown Lands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Director C&E Manager Project Manager

Category	Stakeholder	Relationship
First Nations representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deniliquin Local Aboriginal Land Council (DLALC) • Cumeragunja Local Aboriginal Land Council (CLALC) • Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre • Bangerang Cultural Centre • Narrandera Local Aboriginal Land Council • Michael Lyons, Roley Williams and Jason Matthews • Registered Aboriginal Parties including representatives from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bangerang Aboriginal Corporation – Bundyi Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge – CLALC – DLALC – Leeton District LALC – Sandhills Artefacts – Wiradjuri Council of Elders – Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre – 3 independents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations engagement lead
Water peak bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Irrigators' Council (NSWIC) • Yanco Creek and Tributaries Advisory Council (YACTAC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement lead • Project Manager
Community / advisory groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yanco Stakeholder Advisory Group (YSAG) • Yanco Design Focus Group • Conargo Hall Committee Inc • Murray Lower-Darling Customer Advisory Group • Murrumbidgee Customer Advisory Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement lead • Project Manager

7 Demographic profile

7.1 Wanganella village

The closest settlement to the Wanganella regulator site is Wanganella village, about 1 km north-east of the regulator site. Wanganella village is located on the Cobb Highway, about 35 km north of Deniliquin and about 80 km south of Hay, in the Edward River Local Government Area (LGA). In 2021, Wanganella had a population of 61 people with no languages other than English spoken at home.

The village is centred around Billabong Creek, and features a small number of houses, Wanganella Community Hall, a playground, basketball court and church. Wanganella Store, which included a post office and petrol station, closed in January 2026. Wanganella Creek Camp Park is a campground and cabin accommodation site located south of the creek and east of Cobb Highway, about 1 km east of the new regulator site and 500 m south of Wanganella village.

The peaceful amenity and bush landscape of Billabong Creek is a key attraction for visitors to this area, and the Wanganella Recreation Reserve is often used by locals and visitors for recreational activities, such as fishing and kayaking.

7.2 Conargo village

The Hartwood site is relatively isolated, with no residential dwellings, accommodation facilities, parks or other social infrastructure within 2 km of the site. The closest settlement is Conargo, located 10 km west of the regulator site. Located on the junction of Conargo Road and Carrathool Road, Conargo is a small village within the Edward River LGA, about 30 km northeast of Deniliquin. In 2021, Conargo had a population of 117 people with no languages other than English spoken at home.

Conargo is an agricultural area, mostly sheep stations, with rural residential lands clustered along Conargo Road. Key features of the village include a general store and petrol station, Conargo Hotel, Conargo Recreation Reserve which includes a sports field and tennis courts, Conargo Public School, Conargo Rural Fire Brigade, a church and post office.

7.3 Edward River Local Government Area

In 2021, Edward River Local Government Area (LGA) had a population of 8,456 people. The proportion of people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander was 4.8% (410 people), which was a higher proportion than for NSW (3.4%).

Overall, the Edward River LGA population is characterised by a higher proportion of people aged over 65 years (24.8%) compared to NSW (17.6%). This is also reflected in a higher median age (46 years) compared to NSW (39 years).

The LGA also has a higher proportion of couple families without children (48.8%) compared to NSW (37.9%), which is reflective of an older age profile.

7.4 Socio-economic disadvantage

The Australian Bureau of Statistics produces 4 socio-economic indices for areas (SEIFA) based on census data, which identify areas of relative advantage and disadvantage. The Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage/Disadvantage (IRSAD) was examined for settlements in the local and regional study area.

Socio-economic advantage and disadvantage are defined broadly by the IRSAD in terms of people's access to material and social resources and their ability to contribute to society. To capture this broad definition, the IRSAD captures a range of data points, including income, education, employment, occupation and housing.

The IRSAD divides a population into 10 equal groups, called a decile. The lowest scoring 10 percent of these groups are given a decile number of 1, which indicates the highest level of disadvantage, and the highest scoring 10 percent of areas are given a decile of 10, which indicates the highest level of advantage.

In 2021, Conargo and Wanganella both scored decile 7, which indicates a moderate to high level of advantage. Edward River LGA scored 4 indicating a moderate level of disadvantage.

7.5 Key findings

Key findings from the local and regional baseline outlined in the [EIS Appendix R: Social Impact Report](#) include:

- Billabong Creek is a culturally important body of water for traditional owners, where Aboriginal stakeholders have expressed a high interest in the appropriate management of Billabong Creek for cultural flows of water
- Billabong Creek provides an important supply of domestic and commercial water for towns, villages, and irrigators in area
- water is the 'life blood' of the region and supports the economy and thus lifestyle and wellbeing for surrounding communities
- most irrigation water licences in the Yanco Creek system are general security, stock and domestic, and supplementary licences used for seasonal crops
- the regional community is highly engaged in water matters, however, some are experiencing fatigue from the ongoing need to advocate for their interests
- Wanganella is the only site which has nearby housing, recreational use, accommodation and other social infrastructure. The weir is also located within a recreation reserve.

7.6 Culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and limited technology access

Communication materials will include images, videos, visualisations and maps where appropriate. Key messages will adhere to the Australian Government Style Manual – Literacy and Access Guidelines (Level AAA) for printed materials and comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 level AA or above for online material.

For stakeholders with limited technology access or skills, hard copies of information (e.g. fact sheets, maps, forms, surveys) will be provided.

The communications and engagement team will arrange face-to-face meetings with stakeholders who indicate they are having difficulty accessing or understanding project information.

8 Key messages

8.1 Billabong Creek regulators project

- The NSW Government has secured planning approval to replace 2 ageing weirs along Billabong Creek at Hartwood and Wanganella with modern regulators incorporating fishways.
 - The old weirs, built in the early 20th century, are in poor condition, restrict the movement of fish through Billabong Creek and limit the regulation of flows through the Yanco Creek system, leading to inefficient delivery of water for the environment and irrigators.
 - The new regulators will be fully automated, remotely operated and include fishways, allowing water to be delivered more efficiently through the creek system and improving native fish passage.
 - Replacing the Billabong Creek regulators is part of a range of infrastructure works being delivered as part of the Yanco Creek Modernisation Project, which forms part of the Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism (SDLAM) Acceleration Program.
 - The project is being delivered by the NSW Government with funding from the Australian Government.
-

8.2 Regulator construction

- The new regulators will be located approximately 100 metres downstream of the old weirs.
 - The old weirs will be removed after the new regulators are installed.
 - Work to set up the sites is scheduled to start in December 2025, and construction will continue throughout 2026 with practical completion scheduled for December 2026.
 - Commissioning and handover of the regulators is scheduled for early 2027.
 - The construction is designed to minimise impacts on water flowing through Billabong Creek, allowing water to continue to pass through for irrigation, town water and environmental needs.
 - During the construction period there will be increased truck traffic along local roads including the Cobb Highway between Deniliquin and Wanganella and Conargo Road between Deniliquin and Jerilderie.
 - Access to the area around the new Wanganella regulator site will be restricted while work is underway, however access to Wanganella Recreation Reserve further upstream and downstream of the work site will remain open.
-

8.3 Benefits

- The benefits of replacing the Billabong Creek regulators include:

- more efficient delivery of environmental water
 - the provision of water savings benefits and entitlement to the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder
 - improved fish passage through new fishways
 - improved knowledge and understanding of First Nations cultural heritage through cultural heritage assessments and collaboration with Traditional Owners to identify, protect and document significant sites and artefacts.
 - improved Connection-to-Country through an approach that supports cultural practices, incorporates cultural values into project planning and enables Traditional Owners to return to Country for site surveys
 - an economic, training and employment boost for local communities
 - improved levels of service for water users through more flexible irrigation scheduling
 - reduced risk of further water buybacks from the southern-connected Basin to meet Murray-Darling Basin Plan commitments.
-

8.4 Planning approval

- The green light to proceed with replacing the regulators has been granted following an extensive consultation process including public exhibition of the EIS in November 2024.
 - To view the EIS documentation visit water.dcceew.nsw.gov.au/billabong-creek-regulators and planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/billabong-creek-environmental-water-regulators.
-

8.5 Contact us

- For questions, feedback or complaints:
 - visit water.dcceew.nsw.gov.au/billabong-creek-regulators
 - call 1800 801 738
 - email water.enquiries@dcceew.nsw.gov.au
 - mail NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water Locked Bag 5022 Parramatta NSW 2124.
- If you need help understanding this information, please contact the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 and ask them to call us on 1800 801 738.

To view broader messaging concerning the Yanco Creek Modernisation Project and SDLAM Acceleration Program see [Section 14.2](#).

9 Complaints management system

9.1 Overview

The Water Group commits to preparing and implementing a complaints management system before the commencement of any work. This system will be maintained for the duration of work and for a minimum of 12 months post construction of the project.

All project related enquiries and complaints, including those concerning construction impacts such as noise, traffic, parking, dust or access, will be managed using the Water Group's existing enquiries and complaints management system.

Questions, feedback and complaints can be raised by:

- calling 1800 801 738
- emailing water.enquiries@dcceew.nsw.gov.au
- mailing NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
Locked Bag 5022 Parramatta NSW 2124.

A project-specific telephone number has been established (1800 801 738), and the existing water.enquiries@dcceew.nsw.gov.au email address will be used, for project-specific public and stakeholder enquiries. All calls and emails received during working hours will be triaged by the Water Group's Water Enquiries team, who will be equipped with an enquiry brief and project information to enable timely responses to common matters. Enquiries that cannot be resolved directly will be referred to the Project Manager and Engagement Lead for follow-up. For after-hours enquiries the project-specific telephone number (1800 801 738) will be re-directed to the Project Manager. While it is noted this information needs to be in place 1 month before commencement of work (CoA B6), the Water Group is seeking an amendment to this condition to reduce the timeframe to 1 week. The Water Group commits to complying with the agreed timeframe.

All enquiries and complaints will be logged, triaged and tracked using the Water Group's stakeholder management software, Borealis, with outcomes recorded and summary reporting provided to DPHI as required. A dashboard will be set up to allowing real-time monitoring of enquiries and complaints, and their status.

Project contact details will be clearly displayed on-site signage, the project webpage and other relevant project-specific communication materials, ensuring stakeholders are aware of how to contact the Water Group.

The dedicated Water Enquiries team will:

- provide consistent and accurate information, communicated clearly and simply
- respect personal data and privacy in accordance with the department's Privacy (Data) Breach Policy
- refer enquiries to other departments when necessary (unless customers request otherwise)

- deliver customer service in-line with agreed response timeframes
 - operate a phone line from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays and the Christmas shutdown period)
 - adhere to the department's Code of Ethics and Conduct.
-

9.2 Complaints

The department defines a complaint as, “an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about us, our services/projects, our employees or the handling of a complaint where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected”. Matters relating to a delay or failure in providing a service and the quality of an action taken fall under the definition of service-related complaints.

The Water Group take all complaints seriously and takes the following steps to resolve them.

In relation to this SSI the Water Group commits to:

1. Acknowledging the complaint within 2 working days. When an immediate resolution is not possible, aim to respond or resolve within 5 business days.
2. Where unable to resolve within 5 business days, keeping the complainant informed of the progress of their complaint and likely date of completion.

If a complainant is not satisfied with the response, the complaint will be referred to the relevant Director for potential resolution. If resolution does not occur the complaint will be referred to the Environmental Representative (ER) to assess the complaints reasonableness and proposed resolution (refer to [Section 9.4](#)).

The Water Group commits to developing and maintaining a complaint register in-line with the requirements of CoA B7, and also to the requirements concerning providing stakeholders with the Collection Statement as outlined in CoA B8.

After the completion of construction, the new regulators will eventually be handed over to the new asset owner, WaterNSW, noting this will not happen immediately after completion, as there will be a period of testing, commissioning and resolution of any outstanding matters (e.g. property matters). The handover process and requirements will be specified in the Delivery Deed between WaterNSW and the Water Group, and as one of the pre-conditions all complaints regarding construction (and other matters) would need to have been resolved by the Water Group.

At construction completion the CCS would be updated to reflect the change in the type of activities and the potential change in ownership and operation of the regulators. This revised CCS will be submitted to Planning Secretary for approval. The updated CCS would be implemented for 12 months after completion of construction.

9.3 Complaints register

A register of complaints will be kept and will record the:

- number of complaints received

- the date and time of the complaint
- the method by which the complaint was made
- any personal details of the complainant which were provided by the complainant or, if no such details were provided, a note to that effect
- the nature of the complaint, including the issues raised
- means by which the complaint was addressed and whether resolution was reached, with or without mediation
- if no action was taken, the reason(s) why no action was taken.

The Water Group will provide the ER with a copy of the complaints register on a weekly basis. We will also provide the register to the Planning Secretary upon request, within the timeframe stated in the request. Personal details will not be provided to the ER or the Planning Secretary unless otherwise agreed to, or requested by, the complainant.

9.4 Mediation process

The Water Group commits to the requirements of CoA B6 and to achieving prompt resolution of matters with fairness, care and understanding.

Where a complaint cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant by the Project Manager, Engagement Lead or contractor the complaint will be escalated to the Water Group's Project Director.

If the complaint is not resolved by the Water Group's Project Director, the complaint will be escalated to the Planning Secretary to assess/determine whether the complaint is deemed reasonable or unreasonable.

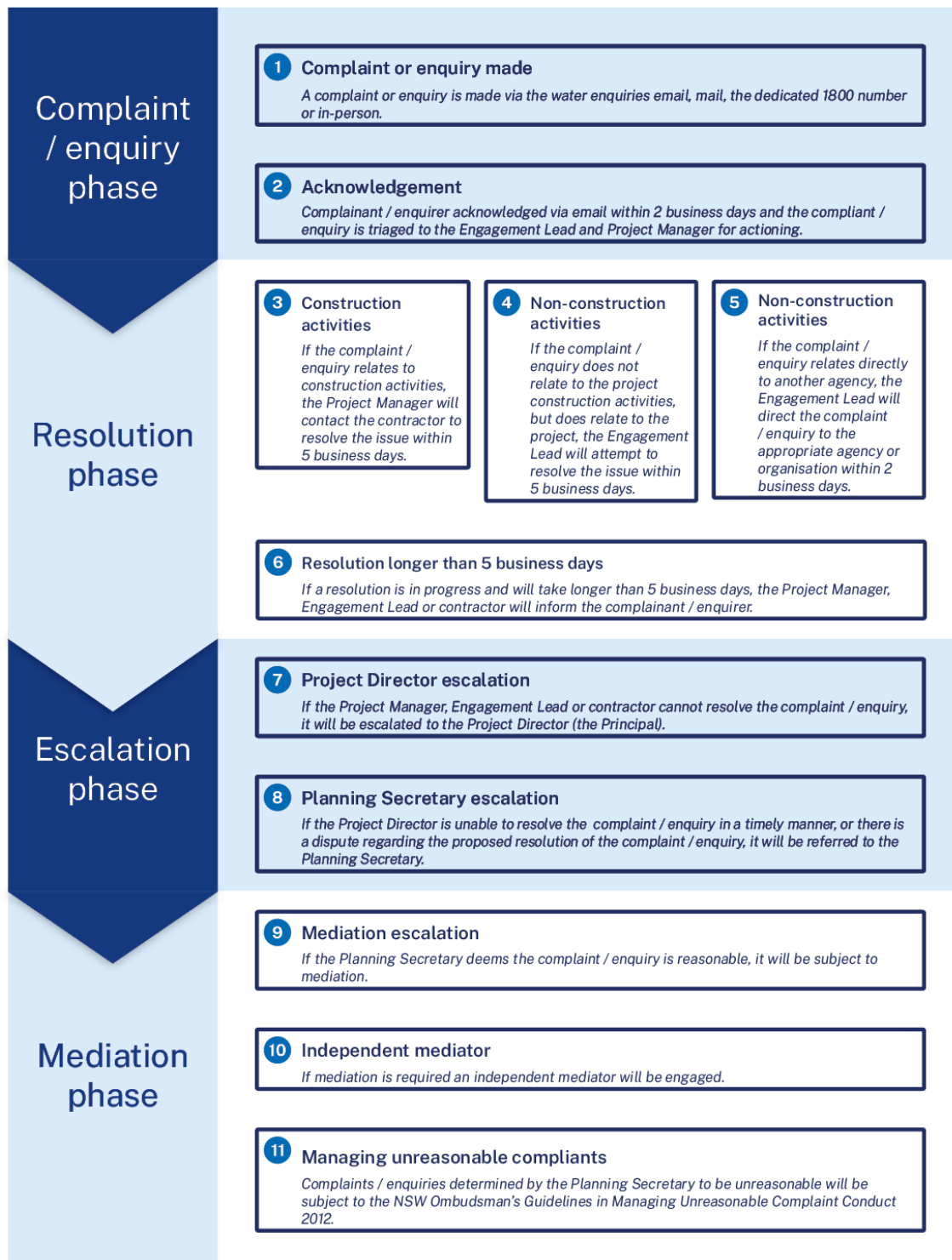
The Planning Secretary may refer the complaint to the ER to assist in resolution.

Complaints confirmed by the Planning Secretary as being reasonable will be subject to mediation. If mediation is required, an independent mediator will be engaged.

Complaints determined by the Planning Secretary to be unreasonable will be subject to the guidelines in Managing Unreasonable Complainant Conduct (NSW Ombudsman 2012).

Figure 1 below outlines the complaints and mediation process in more detail.

Figure 1: SSI complaints resolution and mediation process.



9.5 Continuity of complaints/enquiries

Upon completion of the construction and commissioning phases of the project and meeting other requirements of the Delivery Deed between the Water Group and WaterNSW, the infrastructure will be handed over to, and operated by, the new asset owner, WaterNSW.

The handover will include a complete register of stakeholder queries and complaints for integration into their stakeholder management system. WaterNSW will then become the first point of contact for future stakeholder queries and complaints and any queries or complaints coming through to the Water Group will be referred to them via an agreed channel. As previously noted, a revised CSS will be prepared and provided to the Planning Secretary for approval when timing and handover requirements are further understood.

10 Working out of hours/noise exceedance consultation

To meet the CoA concerning out-of-hours work (OOHW) noise exceedance consultation and agreement, a structured engagement process will be followed to reach all impacted residents and sensitive land uses who have been identified as sensitive receivers. This includes those who previously declined participation unless they've requested no further contact.

The process for engaging with impacted stakeholders will include:

- a formal letter sent to each affected property with the request for engagement concerning the negotiated agreement for OOHW
- a mailbox drop of project information and a request for engagement concerning the agreement
- a door-knock to speak directly with residents
- a poster outlining the works and encouraging residents to contact the Water group displayed at the Wanganella community noticeboard and hall.

If contact cannot be made after these steps, a “sorry we missed you” card will be left with project details and a call back request.

Communication with stakeholders will include clear, plain-English information about the proposed works including:

- a description and justification of the work
- expected noise impacts based on modelling
- any other impacts
- duration of works and planned respite periods
- details of other OOHW occurring before, during or after the proposed works, including weekends
- a telephone number (1800 801 738) and email address if further information is required or there are issues or concerns.

In the case where construction is being undertaken on private land, the OOHW noise exceedance agreement will form part of the construction agreement.

All interactions, including contact attempts, responses and outcomes will be logged in Borealis. The Water Group will request consent from residents and sensitive land uses to share their responses with the Planning Secretary and ER. Any resident or sensitive land use who requests a copy of their consultation record will be provided one.

To view the requirements for community consultation and agreement for OOHW see [Section 14.4](#).

11 SSI webpage

The Water Group has published a dedicated webpage for the SSI at water.dcceew.nsw.gov.au/sdlam/billabong-creek-regulators.

The webpage contains:

- information about the project, including project status
- location map of the new regulators
- regulator designs
- project timeline
- information about the Environmental Impact Statement
- information about vertical slot fishways
- contact information
- privacy statement.

The Water Group commits to maintaining the webpage for the duration of construction and for a minimum of 10 years following the completion of construction, or unless an alternative timeframe is agreed by the Planning Secretary.

In order to increase transparency and for information / documents required as part of the approval to be provided proactively and publicly in an easily accessible manner, the Water Group commits to publishing the following up-to-date information (excluding confidential, personal, commercial information or any other information that the Planning Secretary has approved to be excluded) before the relevant work commences and maintaining this information on the webpage including:

- information on the current implementation status of the SSI
- a copy of the documents listed in Condition A1 of the CoA, and any documentation relating to any modifications made to the SSI or the terms of this approval
- a copy of the CoA in its original form, a current consolidated copy of the CoA (that is, including any approved modifications to its terms), and copies of any approval granted by the Minister to a modification of the terms of the CoA
- a copy of each statutory approval, licence or permit required and obtained in relation to the SSI
- a copy of the current version of each document required under the terms of the CoA
- a copy of the audit reports required under the CoA
- a copy of any report or documents requested by the Planning Secretary in accordance with Condition A4.

Where the information / document relates to a particular work or is required to be implemented, the Water Group commits to publishing a minimum of 1 week before the commencement of the relevant work to which it relates or before its implementation.

Where information is excepted by the CoA, these documents will be provided in their redacted form.

All of the required information will be:

- provided on the dedicated webpage
- ordered in a logical sequence
- easy to navigate
- searchable.

Document titles will be:

- clearly presented
- named to be consistent with the conditions of approval where possible
- give an overall impression of what the document is about
- simple and concise (no more than 50 characters) without any unnecessary punctuation or under scoring in the title.

In determining what information should be published on the webpage to meet the CoA, the Water Group will refer to the principles in Division 2 of Part 2 of the Government Information (Public Access) Act, 2009.

A Collection Statement is included on the webpage to make prospective complainants aware of their rights under the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW):

- the Complaints Register may be forwarded to government agencies, including the Department and its representatives (including independent appointments such as the ER), to allow them to undertake their regulatory duties
- by providing personal information, the complainant authorises the Proponent to provide that information to government agencies
- the supply of personal information by the complainant is voluntary
- the complainant has the right to contact government agencies to access personal information held about them and to correct or amend that information (Collection Statement).

12 Action plan

This section outlines the Water Group’s communications and engagement actions for the construction and commissioning of the Billabong Creek regulators. The focus is on keeping stakeholders informed, addressing concerns promptly, and ensuring clear, consistent messaging to build trust and support successful project delivery.

The Water Group’s Environment, Engagement and Land communications and engagement team is primarily responsible for delivering the action plan, as outlined in Table 6.

Table 6: Environment, Engagement and Land branch resourcing to support the delivery of the action plan.

Role	Title	Team member
C&E Manager	Communications and Engagement Manager (Southern Projects)	Brian Pate
Engagement lead	Senior Communication and Engagement Advisor	Rhys Williams
Landholder engagement lead	Senior Landholder Communication and Engagement Advisor	Emily Ford
Communication lead	Senior Communication and Engagement Advisor	Sally Bolton
First Nations engagement lead	Senior Aboriginal Engagement and Cultural Advisor	Ben Kent
Engagement support	Communication and Engagement Advisor	Alex Scott
Communications support	Communication and Engagement Advisor	Jack Kerkvliet
First Nations engagement support	Aboriginal Engagement and Cultural Advisor	John Gubba Woods

Table 7: Water Group’s proposed actions for the construction and commissioning phase of the Billabong Creek regulators.

Timing	Activity	Target audience	Purpose (IAP2)	Responsible	Measure/evaluation
Feb 2026	<p>EIS determination announcement</p> <p>Announce EIS outcome and planned start of site works through various channels.</p> <p>See <u>Section 14.3</u> for proposed communication channels.</p>	All stakeholders	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication lead • Project Manager • Project Director 	See <u>Section 14.3</u> for proposed communication channel evaluation metrics.
Feb 2026	<p>Publish SSI webpage on Water website at water.dcceew.nsw.gov.au/sdlam/billabong-creek-regulators</p> <p>To view requirements for the webpage see <u>Section 11</u>.</p>	All stakeholders	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication lead • Project Manager • DCCEEW digital team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webpage developed and published • Web metrics • Vanity URL created
Feb 2026	<p>Project fact sheet</p> <p>Development of Billabong Creek regulators fact sheet.</p>	All stakeholders	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication lead • Project Manager 	Fact sheet developed and available at Deniliquin office

Timing	Activity	Target audience	Purpose (IAP2)	Responsible	Measure/evaluation
Feb 2026	<p>Project map</p> <p>Development of Billabong Creek regulators project map.</p>	All stakeholders	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication lead • Project Manager • DCCEEW digital team 	Map developed and available on webpage and at Deniliquin office
Feb 2026 ongoing monthly	<p>Ongoing landholder updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly face-to-face meetings, calls or email updates summarising planned upcoming activities, including noise, completed works and any changed access conditions. • Landowners will be contacted more frequently if there are changes to planned works. 	Affected landholders	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landholder engagement lead • Contractor • Project Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # meetings / updates provided • Stakeholder sentiment

Timing	Activity	Target audience	Purpose (IAP2)	Responsible	Measure/evaluation
Feb 2026 ongoing monthly	<p>Ongoing business, community and council updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly updates summarising upcoming activities, including noise, completed works and any changed access conditions. • Delivered by way of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – face-to-face meetings – email – phone call – letter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wanganella community • Wanganella Caravan Park • Edward River Council • Conargo Hall Committee 	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement lead • Contractor • Project Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # meetings / updates provided • Stakeholder sentiment

Timing	Activity	Target audience	Purpose (IAP2)	Responsible	Measure/evaluation
Feb-Mar 2026	Stakeholder briefings Notifications / briefings on EIS determination, contract award and construction update.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSWIC • YSAG • YACTAC • Edward River Council • Conargo Hall Committee • Helen Dalton MP • Member for Farrer (TBC) 	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement lead • Project Manager • Project Director 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # briefings / notifications • Stakeholder sentiment
Feb-Mar 2026	First Nations briefing Project update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deniliquin LALC • Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre • Bangerang Cultural Centre 	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations engagement lead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # meetings / attendees • Stakeholder sentiment

Timing	Activity	Target audience	Purpose (IAP2)	Responsible	Measure/evaluation
Mar-Apr 2026	<p>Out of hours working consultation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage affected landholders, residents and businesses regarding agreement on out of hours work and noise via a: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> formal letter to affected stakeholders mailbox drop with project info and engagement request door-knock to speak directly with affected stakeholders collateral placed in local points of interest. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landholders Wanganella community Wanganella Caravan Park 	Consult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement lead Project Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # agreements secured

Timing	Activity	Target audience	Purpose (IAP2)	Responsible	Measure/evaluation
Mar 2026	<p>Site establishment work notifications</p> <p>By way of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • letter box drops • phone calls • landholder visits • email. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landholders • Wanganella community • Wanganella Caravan Park • Edward River Council • Deniliquin LALC • Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre • Bangerang Cultural Centre 	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement lead • Project Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # letterbox drops completed • # phone calls made and answered • # landholder visits conducted • # enquiries after sending out notification
Mar 2026	<p>Community drop-in sessions</p> <p>Drop-in sessions at Wanganella to discuss the construction phase of the program, expected noise, dust and traffic impacts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wanganella community 	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement lead • Project Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #attendees • Stakeholder sentiment

Timing	Activity	Target audience	Purpose (IAP2)	Responsible	Measure/evaluation
Mar 2026	Notification of removal of scar tree at Hartwood weir	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deniliquin LALC • Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre • Bangerang Cultural Centre • Conargo Hall Committee 	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement lead • First Nations engagement lead • Project Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # phone calls made and answered • # Emails sent • Stakeholder sentiment
Mar 2026	Briefing with Local Land Services (LLS) Meeting with LLS (Stuart Watson) to discuss heavy vehicle impacts along Conargo Road and communication with drovers along road.	LLS – Murray	Inform /consult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement lead • Project Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting held • Communication process agreed
Mar 2026	YSAG project briefing Interactive in-person session with the YSAG to provide a project status update, introduce the contractor and discuss upcoming construction activities.	YSAG	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement lead • Project Manager • Contractor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing completed • # attendees • Stakeholder sentiment

Timing	Activity	Target audience	Purpose (IAP2)	Responsible	Measure/evaluation
Mar 2026	<p>Conargo Hall Committee meeting</p> <p>Engage the hall committee to provide an update on project.</p>	Conargo Hall Committee	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement lead Project team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting attended Stakeholder sentiment
Mar 2026	<p>In-stream pre-construction work notifications</p> <p>By way of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> letter box drops phone calls landholder visits email. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wanganella community Wanganella Caravan Park Edward River Council Conargo Hall Committee Deniliquin LALC Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre Bangerang Cultural Centre 	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement lead Project Manager Project Director 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # letterbox drops completed # phone calls made and answered # landholder visits conducted # enquiries after sending out notification

Timing	Activity	Target audience	Purpose (IAP2)	Responsible	Measure/evaluation
Mar 2026	Council briefing – construction commencement Briefing to Edward River Council (Mayor and GM) outlining construction timelines, traffic routes, and communication plan.	Edward River Council	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement lead Project Manager 	Briefing held questions/actions addressed
Mar 2026	Customer Advisory Group update Provide project update at Murrumbidgee and Murray CAG meetings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Murray Lower-Darling CAG Murrumbidgee CAG 	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement lead Water Group Executive 	Attend meetings
Apr 2026	Start of construction work notifications <i>See Section 14.3 for proposed communication channels.</i>	All stakeholders	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication lead Project Manager DCCEEW – media Project Director 	<i>See Section 14.3 for proposed communication channel evaluation metrics.</i>
Apr-May 2026	Proposed Ministerial visit Opportunity for ‘sod turning’ event with Minister at Wanganella or Conargo to mark the beginning of construction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister Media 	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement lead Project Manager Project Director Contractor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministerial visit held Media impressions

Timing	Activity	Target audience	Purpose (IAP2)	Responsible	Measure/evaluation
Apr 2026	Draft Water Sharing Plan on public exhibition Notify stakeholders that draft Water Sharing Plan is on public exhibition, which includes the new operation plan for Yanco Creek.	All stakeholders	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement lead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # phone calls made and answered # emails sent # enquiries after sending out notification
Jun 2026	Construction update <i>See Section 14.3 for proposed communication channels.</i>	All stakeholders	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication lead Project Manager Project Director 	<i>See Section 14.3 for proposed communication channel evaluation metrics.</i>
Jun 2026	Key stakeholder update (mid construction) In-person and online briefings on the status of the project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NSWIC YACTAC Edward River Council Helen Dalton MP Member for Farrer (TBC) 	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement lead Project Manager Project Director 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # briefings held Stakeholder sentiment # concerns raised

Timing	Activity	Target audience	Purpose (IAP2)	Responsible	Measure/evaluation
Jun 2026	<p>YSAG site visit (mid construction)</p> <p>Facilitated tour of Hartwood and Wanganella sites to showcase progress.</p>	YSAG	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement lead Project Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # attendees # concerns raised Stakeholder sentiment
Sep 2026	<p>Construction update</p> <p>See Section 14.3 for proposed communication channels.</p>	All stakeholders	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication lead Project Manager Project Director 	See Section 14.3 for proposed communication channel evaluation metrics.
Dec 2026 to early 2027	<p><u>Commissioning and handover announcement</u></p> <p>See Section 14.3 for proposed communication channels.</p>	All stakeholders	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication lead Project Manager DCCEEW – media Project Director 	See Section 14.3 for proposed communication channel evaluation metrics.

Timing	Activity	Target audience	Purpose (IAP2)	Responsible	Measure/evaluation
Dec 2026 to early 2027	<p>Key stakeholder briefings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerning practical completion – commissioning phase Online and in person briefings provided on practical completion, decommissioning of regulators, handover activities, demobilisation, and post-construction communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landholders YSAG Helen Dalton MP Member for Farrer (TBC) NSWIC YACTAC Edward River Council 	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement lead Project Manager Project Director 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # briefings held Stakeholder sentiment # concerns raised
Dec 2026 to early 2027	<p>Site visit to showcase completed regulators</p> <p>Conduct site visit with key stakeholders to showcase completed regulators.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> YSAG Conargo Hall Committee Edward River Council WaterNSW 	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement lead Project Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit held Stakeholder sentiment

Timing	Activity	Target audience	Purpose (IAP2)	Responsible	Measure/evaluation
Dec 2026 to early 2027	Minister visit for commissioning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media opportunity for Minister visit to mark commissioning and handover of new Hartwood and Wanganella regulators Subject to Minister's availability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister Minister's Office Local MPs Media 	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement lead Project Manager DCCEEW – media Project Director 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # media outlets attending # published articles, news segments, or social media posts Sentiment of media coverage
On commissioning	Communication materials and complaints / enquiries log hand-over <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hand-over of all external communication materials to WaterNSW as the new asset owner, including the web page content. Hand-over of detailed complaints / enquiries log to WaterNSW. 	WaterNSW	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication lead Project Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All external communication materials handed over Complaints / enquiries log handed over

13 Revision history

Version	Reviewer/approver	Date	Comment
Version 1	Andrew Lavelle, Director, Infrastructure Delivery	13/01/2026	Issued to ER for review
Version 2.1	Andrew Lavelle, Director, Infrastructure Delivery	02/03/2026	Issued to ER to address review comments
Version 3	Andrew Lavelle, Director, Infrastructure Delivery	11/03/2026	Issued to ER to address review comments

14 Appendices

14.1 Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
Aboriginal cultural heritage	The same meaning as “Aboriginal object” or “Aboriginal place” as defined in section 5 of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NSW).
C&E	The Water Group’s communications and engagement team
CAG	Customer Advisory Group, coordinated by WaterNSW to engage and consult with a broad cross-section of customers in a local area.
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CPHR	Conservation Programs Heritage and Regulation of NSW DCCEEW
CCS	Community Communication Strategy
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
Completion of construction	The date upon which construction is completed and all requirements of the Planning Secretary (if any) have been met. If construction is staged, completion of construction is the date upon which construction is completed and all construction related requirements of the Planning Secretary (if any) have been met, in respect of all stages of construction.
CoA	Conditions of Approval
Construction	Includes Work required to construct the SSI as defined in the Project Description in the documents listed in Condition A1 including commissioning trials of equipment and temporary use of any part of the SSI but excludes Low Impact Work which is carried out or completed prior to approval of the CEMP and work approved under a Site Establishment Management Plan.

Term	Definition
Consultation	To provide information and actively engage with and obtain and consider feedback from stakeholders following project approval. How the feedback has been considered and whether any changes have been made in response to this feedback is then documented and communicated back to stakeholders. Consultation should not be limited to one-way notification about the project.
DPHI	NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
DPIRD Fisheries	NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Fisheries Division
eDM	Electronic direct mail, a digital marketing strategy involving sending targeted, data-driven messages to individuals who have given permission to receive communications.
EIS	The Environmental Impact Statement referred to in Condition A1, submitted to the Planning Secretary seeking approval to carry out the development described in it, and including any additional information provided by the Proponent in support of the application for approval of the project.
ER	The Environmental Representative(s) for the SSI approved by the Planning Secretary.
Environment	Includes all aspects of the surroundings of humans, whether affecting any human as an individual or in their social groupings.
Heavy vehicle	Has the same meaning as in the <u>Heavy Vehicle National Law (NSW)</u> .
IAP2	International Association for Public Participation Spectrum of Public Participation
IRSAD	Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage
LALC(s)	Local Aboriginal Land Council(s)
Land	Has the same meaning as the definition of the term in section 1.4 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (NSW).
Landowner	Has the same meaning as “owner” in the Local Government Act 1993 and in relation to a building means the owner of the building.
LGA	Local Government Area

Term	Definition
LLS	NSW Government Local Land Services
Local Road	Any road that is not defined as a classified road under the Roads Act 1993.
LOTE	Language other than English
Low impact work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • surveys • investigations • property acquisition adjustment work • archaeological testing under the Code of practice for archaeological investigation of Aboriginal objects in NSW (DECCW, 2010) or archaeological monitoring to ensure that there is no impact on heritage items • maintenance of existing buildings and structures required to facilitate the carrying out of the SSI • works or uses that the ER has determined will have minimal environmental or community impact, including out-of-hours work determined under (b) below. <p>Notwithstanding the following works are not low impact work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • where heritage items or expected archaeological potential, or threatened species or threatened ecological communities (within the meaning of the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 or Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999) are affected or potentially affected by any low impact work, that work is construction, unless otherwise determined by the Planning Secretary, following consultation by the Proponent with Heritage NSW, CPHR or DPIRD Fisheries (in the case of impact upon fish and aquatic invertebrates); and • any work undertaken outside the hours specified in Condition that exceeds noise management and vibration levels as identified in Condition (b), unless determined by the ER the activity can occur. <p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • early stages of work are not necessarily low impact work • low impact work is not construction as defined by this approval • where ER approval is sought, the Proponent must justify the need to undertake the activity and advise how any low impact activity will be managed including duration of the activity and cumulative impacts.

Term	Definition
Minister	NSW Minister for Water
Murray-Darling Basin Plan	The Murray–Darling Basin Plan (the Basin Plan) was legislated in 2012 to ensure a coordinated approach to water management across the Basin states of New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory.
NSWIC	New South Wales Irrigators’ Council
Operation	The carrying out of the SSI (whether in full or in part) upon the completion of construction, unless otherwise agreed by the Planning Secretary. Note: there may be overlap between the carrying out of construction and operation if the phases of the development are staged. Commissioning trials of equipment and temporary use of any part of the SSI are within the definition of construction.
OOHW	Out of hours work
Planning Secretary	Planning Secretary of DPHI (or nominee, whether nominated before or after the date on which this approval was granted).
Practical completion	Practical completion is achieved when works are complete except for minor defects that do not prevent the works from being used for their stated purpose, and essential documents for use, operation, and maintenance have been supplied.
Proponent	The person identified as such in Schedule 1 of the Condition of Approval and any other person carrying out any part of the SSI from time to time.
RAPs	Registered Aboriginal Parties
Relevant council(s)	Edward River Council
RFI	Request for Information report
Response to Submissions	The Proponent’s response to issues raised in submissions received in relation to the application for approval for the SSI under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (NSW).
SDLAM	Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism, a package of measures under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan being delivered by Basin state governments.

Term	Definition
SDLAM Acceleration Program	The Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism Acceleration Program, which includes 5 projects being delivered by the NSW Government with funding from the Australian Government.
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas, a ranking of Local Government Areas by the Australian Bureau of Statistics
SSI	The State Significant Infrastructure, as generally described in Schedule 1 of the Conditions of Approval, the carrying out of which is approved under the terms of this approval.
Sensitive land use(s)	Includes residences, educational institutions (including preschools, schools, universities, TAFE colleges), health care facilities (including nursing homes, hospitals), religious facilities (including churches), childcare centres and passive recreation areas (including outdoor grounds used for teaching). Receivers that may be identified as sensitive include commercial premises (including film and television studios, research facilities, entertainment spaces, temporary accommodation such as caravan parks and camping grounds, restaurants, office premises, and retail spaces) and industrial premises as identified by the Planning Secretary.
Unexpected heritage find	An object or place that is discovered during the carrying out of the SSI and which may be a heritage item but was not identified in the documents listed in Condition A1 or suspected to be present. An unexpected heritage find does not include human remains.
Vulnerable or marginalised group	Vulnerable or marginalised groups include those people: on very low incomes, living with disabilities or poor health, from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, experiencing homelessness or insecure housing, and those who for whatever reason are unable or unwilling to express or represent themselves and their needs.
Water Group	The Water Group within the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
Work	Any physical activity for the purpose of the SSI including Construction and Low Impact Work.
YACTAC	Yanco Creek and Tributaries Advisory Council Inc, the peak body for water resource advocacy and natural resource management in the Yanco Creek System.

Term	Definition
YSAG	Yanco Stakeholder Advisory Group, convened by the Water Group

14.2 Additional key messaging

About the Yanco Creek Modernisation Project

- Part of the NSW Government's Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism (SDLAM) Acceleration Program, the Yanco Creek Modernisation Project is modernising infrastructure to enable smarter management of water in the Yanco Creek system – including Yanco, Billabong, Colombo and Forest creeks.
- Other complementary project works in the Yanco Creek system are being delivered, including smaller regulators, access culverts and hydrometric stations, as well as new environmental flow provisions, operating rules, and improved use of technology to manage the new infrastructure more efficiently.
- The Yanco Creek system links 2 of Australia's largest rivers—the Murrumbidgee and Murray - through over 800 km of interconnected waterways in the Riverina region of southwestern NSW.
- The creek system commences in the traditional lands of the Wiradjuri people and flows through Bangerang, Yorta Yorta, Barapa Barapa and Wamba Wamba traditional country.
- These local waterways support many important uses including farming, town water supply, native fish and waterbirds, and recreation. They also have significant cultural heritage value.
- For more information:
 - visit water.nsw.gov.au/yanco-creek-modernisation-project
 - call 1300 081 047
 - email water.enquiries@dcceew.nsw.gov.au

About the SDLAM Acceleration program

- The NSW Government is making significant progress on 5 water infrastructure projects across the Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers in southern NSW as part of the Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism (SDLAM) Acceleration program.
- Part of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, SDLAM is a program designed to achieve similar or improved environmental outcomes for rivers, wetlands and wildlife using less water.
- NSW is solely or jointly responsible for 22 SDLAM projects, of which 12 are complete or operational and already delivering Basin Plan outcomes.
- The additional 5 accelerated SDLAM projects will deliver up to 45 GL of the outstanding amount needed to reach the 605 GL water recovery target required by the Basin Plan each year, reducing the need for water buybacks and delivering strong ecological outcomes for the Murray-Darling Basin.
- The Australian Government has committed \$446 million to the delivery of the accelerated SDLAM projects by 31 December 2026.

- Works across more than 80 sites include upgrading or installing new regulators, fishways, bridges, rock crossings, block banks, culverts, and access tracks, and removing old infrastructure.
- The projects are also creating an estimated 300 jobs in regional areas and boosting regional economies where they are being delivered.
- We have worked closely with First Nations representatives to complete Aboriginal cultural heritage studies of the project sites. Informed by these studies, we have First Nations representatives on site when required to monitor and ensure cultural artefacts are preserved and protected.
- We will continue to keep communities and stakeholders informed as the projects progress through construction.

14.3 Proposed communications channels and evaluation methods for major announcements

This section outlines the communication channels and evaluation methods proposed for major announcements during the construction and commissioning of the Billabong Creek regulators. These approaches aim to ensure information is delivered through the most effective platforms and engagement outcomes are measured to continually improve stakeholder interaction.

Table 8: Water Group’s proposed communication channels and evaluation methods for major announcements during the construction and commissioning phase.

Communications channel	Measurement/evaluation
Media / press release (subject to advice from the DCCEEW media team and Minister’s Office)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # media impressions • # media sentiment • # interview
Social media	Social media metrics
SMS	# SMS sent
Direct communications (phone / direct email)	# calls made / emails sent
Print / radio advertising	Circulation / readership / audience
Electronic direct mail (eDMs)	eDM metrics
Website	Web metrics
Letterbox drop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # flyers distributed • # QR code scans
Posters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # posters displayed • # QR code scans
Fact sheets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # fact sheets distributed • # QR code scans
Water News e-newsletter	eDM metrics
Local council channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # channels • Social media metrics • eDM metrics

14.4 Requirements for consultation and agreement for out-of-hours-work

Any negotiated agreements with affected residents and sensitive land use(s) for out-of-hours-work must:

- include consultation of impacted residents and sensitive land use(s). This includes sensitive land use(s) that have declined to participate in previous agreements unless a community member has explicitly requested not to be involved in any future consultation about future out-of-hours-work;
- include the following information:
 - description and justification of the Work(s) proposed;
 - any expected impacts in clear plain English based on noise modelling;
 - the expected duration of the Work(s);
 - respite periods;
 - any expected benefits for receivers;
 - any other known concurrent OOHW that will be occurring; and
 - any other OOHW that will be occurring on the nights preceding and following the proposed works or, if the proposed work precedes or follows a weekend period, any other OOHW that will be occurring on the weekend;
- request consent from the residents and sensitive land use(s) for their responses to be provided to the Planning Secretary and ER;
- ensure that a record is kept when contact cannot be made with residents and sensitive land use(s) after three attempts, including leaving "sorry I missed you" cards explaining the reason for the visit and requesting a return phone call; and
- for longer term community agreements (those predicted to go on longer than 28 calendar days), re-engage the impacted community to ensure consent is maintained and continuing.

Detailed records of all community consultations, including attempts to contact impacted residents and sensitive land use(s), must be maintained for the duration of the Work by the Proponent.

Any residents and sensitive land use(s) who requests a copy of the record of conversations must be supplied with one.

The outcomes of the community consultation and agreement process must be documented and include:

- the script used during the community consultation;
- community response and consent rates (including where no contact could be made) based on:
 - impacted sensitive land use(s);
 - location of the proposed work to the sensitive land use(s);

- duration and potential impacts to be experienced; and
- proposed mitigation and management measures to be implemented.