

Regional Water Strategy

NSW Murray – Implementation Plan

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Acknowledging Aboriginal people

The NSW Government acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands, water, sea and Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and future leaders.

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

We show our respect through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work. We seek to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places where Aboriginal peoples and communities are included socially, culturally and economically to self-determine their own futures.

The NSW Government acknowledges the Bangerang, Barapa Barapa, Barkandji, Bidhawal, Kureinji, Maljangapa, Maraura, Mutthi Mutthi, Ngarigu, Ngiyampaa, Nyeri Neri, Wadi Wadi, Wemba Wemba, Wiradjuri and Yorta Yorta people as having an intrinsic connection with the lands and waters of the NSW Murray Regional Water Strategy area. The landscape and its waters provide the Aboriginal people with essential links to their history and help them maintain and practice their traditional culture and lifestyle.

We recognise the Traditional Owners as the first managers of Country. Incorporating their culture and knowledge into management of water in the region is a significant step towards closing the gap.

Under this regional water strategy we seek to establish meaningful and collaborative relationships with Aboriginal people. We will seek to shift our focus to a Country-centred approach; respecting, recognising and empowering cultural and traditional Aboriginal knowledge in water management processes at a strategic level.

We show our respect for Elders past and present through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places where Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically.

As we refine and implement the NSW Murray Regional Water Strategy, we commit to helping support the health and wellbeing of waterways and Country by valuing, respecting and being guided by Aboriginal people, who know that if we care for Country, it will care for us.

We acknowledge that further work is required under this regional water strategy to inform how we care for Country and ensure Aboriginal people/Traditional Owners hold a strong voice in shaping the future for all communities.

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

Implementing the NSW Murray Regional Water Strategy

The NSW Murray Regional Water Strategy charts the NSW Government's long-term vision and direction for delivering sustainable and resilient water services and contains 22 actions to address the key water challenges of the region over the next 20–30 years. The strategy sets out sub-actions required to achieve each action and this implementation plan identifies funded sub-actions for delivery now.

Funded sub-actions are works that are underway or planned (and funded) for delivery within 5 years by implementation partners. Unfunded longer-term sub-actions specified in the NSW Murray Regional Water Strategy will be carried out when funding becomes available:

- **funded sub-actions** are works that are underway or planned (and funded) for delivery within 5 years by implementation partners
- **currently unfunded sub-actions** are works that are expected to be required within a 5–20-year timeframe but are not currently planned or funded by implementation partners.

This phased implementation is based on NSW Government's capacity to deliver. We have heard from stakeholders that most actions in the strategy should be a priority, however, not all sub-actions can be progressed at once, and funding is a key consideration in planning when and how the actions will be implemented.

Work has already commenced on many of the strategy's sub-actions.

The NSW Murray Regional Water Strategy has been designed to be adaptive. This means we will update the strategy and implementation plan to respond to changing circumstances and priorities.

About this implementation plan

Only funded sub-actions are included in this implementation plan because it focuses on the first 5 years of implementing the NSW Murray Regional Water Strategy.

For a full list of all sub-actions, please refer to the NSW Murray Regional Water Strategy: www.water.dcceew.nsw.gov.au/our-work/plans-and-strategies/regional-water-strategies-program/nsw-murray-regional-water-strategy

The implementation plan identifies the lead agency responsible for delivering each sub-action. This allows us to better:

- monitor the progress of actions
- assess the effectiveness of the strategy
- identify areas for improvement.

Implementation partners

To effectively implement the actions, the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (NSW DCCEEW – Water) will work with a diverse group of partners that include the following government agencies, local government, community and industry groups and individuals:

- NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water – Conservation Programs, Heritage and Regulation (NSW DCCEEW – CPHR)
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development – Fisheries (DPIRD – Fisheries)
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development – Local Land Services (DPIRD – LLS)
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development – Regional Aboriginal Partnership Outcomes (DPIRD – RAPO)
- Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure – Planning (DPHI – Planning)
- Asset owners
- Australian Government
- Snowy Hydro Limited
- Local water utilities
- WaterNSW

- Australian Government Department of Defence
- NSW Office of the Cross Border Commissioner.

Monitoring, evaluation and progress reporting

The strategy and the implementation plan are intended to adapt to the dynamic nature of water management in the NSW Murray region. Progress of funded short-term sub-actions will be regularly evaluated by the department by liaising with lead agencies and recognised supporting and co-lead agencies. Any changes due to variables such as climate cycles, population change, funding availability, and other short- and medium-term events may impact on the implementation of actions and sub-actions.

Reading the implementation plan

The NSW Murray Regional Water Strategy is the result of significant analysis and community engagement and builds on a range of existing commitments and work already underway.

The following tables outline funded sub-actions already underway or planned (and funded) by implementation partners for the NSW Murray region.

The table includes:

- priorities
- actions
- sub-actions.

The priorities address the challenges in the region and aim to improve our readiness to adapt to a more variable climate.

The actions address the priority areas and aim to achieve both short-term and longer-term outcomes. Actions include policy, planning, behavioural, regulatory, technology and infrastructure solutions.

Funded sub-actions include works underway or planned for delivery within 5 years by delivery partners. Funded sub-actions will achieve short-term outcomes and contribute to longer-term outcomes. Unfunded sub-actions are not included in the implementation plan.

The NSW Government agency or partner identified as responsible for delivering each program in the strategy is listed as 'lead' under each sub-action in the implementation tables.



Image courtesy of Destination NSW. Lake Jindabyne, NSW.

Priority 1

Continue to improve water management

Action	Funded sub-actions	Lead
Action 1.2: Improve strategic water management and decision-making frameworks by incorporating new climate and modelled data	1.2.1 Review and update water sharing plans for the NSW Murray region ¹ using new climate data and information.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	1.2.2 Review aspects of the surface water allocation framework to improve adaptability to climate variability for different water availability conditions. 1.2.2.a Investigate changes to minimum inflows in the water allocation framework.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	1.2.4 Continue to work with Murray–Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) on the Water Market Reform Roadmap recommendation to investigate impacts of carryover. Subject to Australian government funding.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
Action 1.3: Continue to build the climate evidence base for the next Snowy Water Licence Review	1.3.1 Establish formal inter-jurisdictional data-sharing agreements to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilitate the exchange of model input data, ensuring seamless collaboration for ongoing model refinements and climate evidence integration • agree on an approach to incorporate climate change into the modelling. This sub-action is subject to securing funding.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	1.3.3 Implement recommended actions from the 10-Year Snowy Water Licence Review, that are tested and developed using the new integrated modelling, where appropriate, to adapt the licence to changing climate conditions. This sub-action is subject to securing funding.	NSW DCCEEW – Water

1. The unregulated and regulated water sharing plans of the NSW Murray region are due for renewal in 2034 and 2026 respectively. This provides an opportunity to consider the new climate data in these reviews. The various groundwater water sharing plans covering the Murrumbidgee region are due for replacement in 2030 and the new climate data could be incorporated into these plans as well.

Action	Funded sub-actions	Lead
Action 1.4: Strengthen the role of Aboriginal people in water management	1.4.1 Continue to implement Priority 2 of the NSW Water Strategy to strengthen the role of Aboriginal people in water planning and management, with future actions to be guided by the NSW Aboriginal Water Strategy.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	1.4.2 Continue the current NSW Regional Aboriginal Water Committee (RAWC) model of engagement through to at least the end of June 2026, and seek RAWC member views on preferences for a model beyond June 2026.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	1.4.3 Explore how Aboriginal people want to be represented on the NSW Murray and Lower Darling Environmental Water Advisory Group (EWAG) and how their priorities may be represented in annual and long-term environmental water planning.	NSW DCCEEW – CPHR
	1.4.4 Continue to collaborate with Aboriginal people in a culturally appropriate way to understand and identify programs needed for their communities.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
Action 1.5: Better integrate strategic land use and water planning	1.5.1 Assess the region’s water demand considering population growth and regional development trends to identify shifts in water needs.	NSW DCCEEW – Water DPHI – Planning
	1.5.2 Evaluate potential flood risks by analysing new developments and changes in land use that could increase vulnerability to flooding.	DPHI – Planning
	1.5.5 Continue to review and update local government and state government water and land use planning frameworks to ensure alignment. Including improved involvement of local water utilities and county councils in the planning approval process.	NSW DCCEEW – Water DPHI – Planning
Action 1.6: Work with Basin Governments to participate in the review of the Commonwealth Water Act 2007	1.6.1 Work with Basin Governments to participate in the review of the Commonwealth <i>Water Act 2007</i> .	NSW DCCEEW – Water

Priority 2

Improve river and catchment health

Action	Funded sub-actions	Lead
Action 2.1: Rehabilitate ecologically and culturally important sites within the mid and lower catchment	2.1.1 Collaborate with local Aboriginal people and local communities to support new and existing initiatives to maintain and preserve water-related cultural sites and landscapes.	NSW DCCEEW – CPHR
Action 2.2: Encourage partnerships with the irrigation sector for environmental water delivery to public and private lands	2.2.1 Explore additional opportunities to deliver water to wetlands using irrigation networks through voluntary partnerships between land holders, irrigation infrastructure operators and governments.	NSW DCCEEW – CPHR
	2.2.3 Progress the Restoring Murray Waterways Project as a new SDLAM measure, subject to suitable funding arrangements being agreed.	NSW DCCEEW – CPHR
Action 2.3: Mitigate the impact of infrastructure on native fish	2.3.2 Collaborate with local governments to investigate and apply basic best-practice solutions to mitigate impacts locally (e.g. implementation of fish friendly culverts) as funding and works allow.	DPIRD – Fisheries
	2.3.3 Progress the development of a NSW Fish Diversion Screening Strategy.	DPIRD – Fisheries
	2.3.6 Continue the NSW commitment to the National Carp Control Plan (NCCP), noting that the implementation of any NCCP actions is dependent on Australian Government investment. ²	DPIRD – Fisheries

2. Available at: agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/pests-diseases-weeds/pest-animals-and-weeds/national-carp-control-plan

Action	Funded sub-actions	Lead
Action 2.4: Support development and implementation of the NSW Murray Floodplain Management Plan (FMP) and address floodplain structures	2.4.1 Progress the NSW Murray Floodplain Management Plan by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> developing new hydraulic models identifying existing flood works (approved and unapproved) identifying flood-dependent ecological assets identifying flood-dependent Aboriginal cultural assets and values and heritage sites. 	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	2.4.2 Define an overall boundary for the floodplain and categorise the different areas within it into management zones.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	2.4.3 Cross-check depth and velocity of flood water in the models with existing floodway networks, aerial photography and river gauge data of historical flood events, cultural values, and environmental considerations to form the basis of the management zones.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	2.4.4 Undertake a comprehensive consultation process for the development of the NSW Murray Floodplain Management Plan incorporating local expertise, with formal public consultation and opportunities for property-scale feedback.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	2.4.5 Establish an interagency working group to review the plan throughout each stage of development.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
Action 2.5: Continue to expand and update groundwater data collection and modelling to improve groundwater knowledge in the NSW Murray region	2.5.1 Undertake a review of the monitoring bore network to assess the suitability of the monitoring program.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	2.5.2a Update, calibrate and peer review existing numerical groundwater models for the NSW Murray region by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> incorporating new information from upgraded and expanded monitoring system incorporating uncertainty analysis. 	NSW DCCEEW – Water
Action 2.6: Adopt a catchment management approach to improve water quality in the NSW Murray region	2.6.1 Explore reform options under the Integrated Catchment Management Work Program that could improve catchment management in NSW.	NSW DCCEEW – Water

Action	Funded sub-actions	Lead
Action 2.7: Support delivery of cultural outcomes and how cultural values are identified for Aboriginal people	2.7.1 Work with the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop a proposed NSW Closing the Gap water target • examine governance arrangements for Aboriginal water ownership and management outcomes. 	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	2.7.2 Support Aboriginal communities to develop cultural watering plans. These plans help identify ways to increase Aboriginal access to water and support protection of cultural values.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	2.7.3 Through the Reconnecting River Country Program, establish a cultural values monitoring program for sites benefited or impacted by relaxed constraints environmental water releases.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
Action 2.8: Seek agreement with the Australian Government to develop and implement the Reconnecting River Country Program in the NSW Murray region	2.8.1 Deliver early works projects by December 2026, including upgrading aging infrastructure in the Werai Forest.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	2.8.2 Continue to work with Murray–Darling Basin Authority and other Basin state governments to progress work on a Murray constraints project informed by the Constraints Relaxation Implementation Roadmap. ³	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	2.8.3 Progress technical studies in the Murray River system to inform a future final business case (up to 2026).	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	2.8.4 Confirm authorising environment to develop and deliver the Reconnecting River Country Program Murray Project.	NSW DCCEEW – Water

3. For more information on the Constraints Relaxation Implementation Roadmap see: www.mdba.gov.au/water-management/basin-plan/relaxing-constraints

Action	Funded sub-actions	Lead
Action 2.9: Support ongoing river restoration in the Upper NSW Murray and Snowy catchments	2.9.1 Continue supporting the existing community and government catchment management investments, programs and plans, such as the Upper Murray River Works Program.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	2.9.2 Seek ongoing funding by the Australian Government and contributions of NSW Government funding towards catchment improvement activities.	NSW DCCEEW – Water NSW DCCEEW – CPHR
	2.9.3 Conserve threatened species through activities such as fish passage improvements aligned with Action 2.3: Mitigate the impact of infrastructure on native fish.	DPIRD – Fisheries
	2.9.4 Manage weed infestations and control pest animals.	DPIRD – Local Land Services
Action 2.10: Improve the flow regime of the Snowy and montane rivers	2.10.1 Seek opportunities to undertake studies to address key knowledge gaps concerning river health through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seeking ongoing funding by the Australian Government and contributions of NSW-funding • cooperating with local research organisations, community and Aboriginal communities’ groups. 	NSW DCCEEW – CPHR

Action	Funded sub-actions	Lead
Action 2.10: Improve the flow regime of the Snowy and montane rivers	2.10.2 Investigate operational improvements in environmental water management including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduction of carry-over allocations for Snowy River and Snowy montane rivers increased flows • improving flexibility to allow changes to be made to scheduled daily flow releases to respond to natural flow events or environmental requirements • allowing flow releases to have more natural variation within a 24-hour period rather than being held constant for that time • investigating investment in infrastructure improvements to montane river systems to allow more flexible management of releases • continuing to investigate using the Mowamba River to make environmental releases • increasing annual volumes of water releases from Jindabyne Dam. 	NSW DCCEEW – CPHR NSW DCCEEW – Water
	2.10.4 Recommend amending water sharing plans to legislate protection of environmental water through the Snowy River, subject to concurrence of the Minister for the Environment.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	2.10.5 Seek funding for additional monitoring river ecosystems to assess the effects of improved management under Action 2.9: Support ongoing river restoration in the Upper NSW Murray and Snowy catchments and Action 2.10: Improve the flow regime of the Snowy and montane rivers.	NSW DCCEEW – CPHR

Priority 3

Support sustainable economies and communities

Action	Funded sub-actions	Lead
Action 3.1: Develop and enable employment and business opportunities for Aboriginal people	3.1.1 Continue to support development opportunities for Aboriginal businesses through a range of programs including the Regional Aboriginal Partnership Program. ⁴	DPIRD – RAPO
	3.1.2 Support programs designed to enhance Aboriginal people’s connection to Country and provide meaningful career pathways.	DPIRD – Local Land Services
Action 3.2: Support groundwater use for towns and communities	3.2.1 Continue to support towns and cities using groundwater to improve their urban water planning, in line with the Regulatory and Assurance Framework for Local Water Utilities.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	3.2.2 Work with local councils, state government agencies and other stakeholders in line with the Regulatory and Assurance Framework for Local Water Utilities to help better understand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • whether existing town water bore infrastructure can provide sustainable supply during droughts • if the current capacity of infrastructure and groundwater conditions (quantity and quality) are sufficient to meet demand • the likelihood and consequences of shortfalls of groundwater • any issues around the groundwater licence application and approvals process. 	NSW DCCEEW – Water
Action 3.4: Support towns and local water utilities to understand and manage their future water security risks	3.4.1 Support councils and local water utilities with guidance to confirm the level of risk through town water security analyses using the new climate data.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	3.4.2 Support councils and local water utilities to investigate options for town water security including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • capability to purchase or trade additional water entitlements • potential alternative supply options from groundwater • innovative water management options for towns and industry such as stormwater harvesting and use of recycled water by industry, within or near towns. 	NSW DCCEEW – Water

4. Available at: www.nsw.gov.au/regional-nsw/regional-aboriginal-partnerships-program

Action	Funded sub-actions	Lead
Action 3.5: Implement NSW's commitments in the NSW Alternatives to Buybacks Plan	3.5.1 Deliver newly notified and existing SDLAM projects by December 2026 and efficiency projects by December 2027 to deliver environmental outcomes while minimising Australian Government water buybacks.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
Action 3.6: Improve public access to climate information and water availability forecasts	3.6.1 Update existing data and information for the Water Insights portal and information dashboards.	NSW DCCEEW – Water WaterNSW
	3.6.2 Continue to upload climate and flow data to the NSW Governments Sharing and Enabling Environmental Data (SEED) portal, ⁵ including user guidance.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	3.6.4 Improve communication of the NSW Murray Regional Water Strategy climate datasets and climate risk modelling (e.g. by making more detailed information publicly available).	NSW DCCEEW – Water

5. NSW Government, *Sharing and Enabling Environmental Data in NSW*, available at: seed.nsw.gov.au/

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the Environment and Water