

Regional Water Strategy

Murrumbidgee – 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 Barapa Barapa, Nari Nari, Ngarigu, Ngunnawal/Ngunawal, Mutthi Mutthi, Wadi Wadi, Wemba Wemba, Wiradjuri, Wolgalu and Yita Yita people as having an intrinsic connection with the lands and waters of the Murrumbidgee 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 Murrumbidgee 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 Murrumbidgee Regional Water Strategy

The Murrumbidgee Regional Water Strategy charts the NSW Government's long-term vision and direction for delivering sustainable and resilient water services and contains 25 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 Murrumbidgee 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 Murrumbidgee 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 Murrumbidgee Regional Water Strategy.

For a full list of all sub-actions, please refer to the Murrumbidgee Regional Water Strategy: www.water.dcceew.nsw.gov.au/our-work/plans-and-strategies/regional-water-strategies-program/murrumbidgee-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 Murrumbidgee 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 Murrumbidgee 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 Murrumbidgee 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. Goobarragandra River, Tumut.

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 Murrumbidgee 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.	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 carryovers. 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 interjurisdictional 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 Murrumbidgee region are due for renewal in 2025 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 Murrumbidgee Environmental Water Advisory Group (EWAG) and the Snowy Advisory Committee (SAC), 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 (including for the ACT) 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: Improve operation of the regulated Murrumbidgee River system	1.6.1 Progress the Murrumbidgee Airspace Management Project. This project has been supported by Basin governments to progress as a new SDLAM supply measure. Funding arrangements to support delivery of the project are being discussed.	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
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
Action 2.4: Support the development and implementation of Murrumbidgee and Billabong Creek Floodplain Management Plans (FMPs) and address floodplain structures	2.4.1 Progress the Murrumbidgee and Billabong Creek Floodplain Management Plans 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. Information about the NCCP is 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 the development and implementation of Murrumbidgee and Billabong Creek Floodplain Management Plans (FMPs) and address floodplain structures (continued)	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 Murrumbidgee and Billabong Creek 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 Murrumbidgee region	2.5.1 Undertake a review of the monitoring bore network to assess the suitability of the monitoring program.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	2.5.2.a Update, calibrate and peer review existing numerical groundwater models for the Murrumbidgee 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 Murrumbidgee 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 Organisations 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 Murrumbidgee Project, establish a cultural values monitoring program for sites benefited or impacted by relaxed constraints environmental water releases.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
Action 2.8: Implement Phase 1 of the Reconnecting River Country Program Murrumbidgee Project and seek agreement with the Australian Government to deliver Phase 2	2.8.1 Progress the final business case for the Reconnecting River Country Program Murrumbidgee Project (submitted February 2025).	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	2.8.2 Commence delivery of Phase 1, reaching agreements with the most affected landholders, scoping public works, delivering First Nations measures and improved flow notification system.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	2.8.3 Deliver early works projects by December 2026, including the Mundowry Lane and Mundarlo Bridge projects.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	2.8.4 Continue to work with the Murray–Darling Basin Authority and other Basin state governments to progress work on constraints informed by the Constraints Relaxation Implementation Roadmap. ³	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	2.8.5 Seek an agreement (subject to additional funding) with the Australian Government to deliver Phase 2 of the Murrumbidgee Project after December 2026.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	2.8.6 By December 2026, work with WaterNSW, environmental water managers and stakeholders to review and update river management operating procedures and systems in the Murrumbidgee to better support environmental water delivery.	NSW DCCEEW – Water

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

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

4. More information available at: www.nsw.gov.au/regional-nsw/regional-aboriginal-partnerships-program

Action	Funded sub-actions	Lead
Action 3.2: Support groundwater use for towns and communities (continued)	3.2.4 Support efforts by the Department of Defence and Riverina Water to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • manage the plume of PFAS in the East Wagga bore field by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – providing a coordinated state government response. This includes supporting Riverina Water in their strategic planning to explore long-term options to secure a safe drinking water supply for the region. We will ensure Goldenfields Water is included in these considerations – supporting the investigation of alternate sources of water – such as moving the bore and/or constructing a pipeline from one of the major dams in the region as well as other options. • investigate other potential sources of contamination in West Wagga Wagga. 	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 analysis using the new climate data.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	3.4.2 Scope the upgrade of groundwater models for the Murrumbidgee catchment to enable assessment of future water availability (supply shortfalls assessments) to Wagga Wagga, Leeton and Griffith.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	3.4.3 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
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 to minimise Australian Government water buybacks.	NSW DCCEEW – Water

Action	Funded sub-actions	Lead
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 Government’s Sharing and Enabling Environmental Data (SEED) portal, ⁵ including user guidance.	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	3.6.4 Improve communication of the Murrumbidgee Regional Water Strategy climate datasets and climate risk modelling (e.g. by making more detailed information publicly available).	NSW DCCEEW – Water
Action 3.7: Improve awareness of the Murrumbidgee Cultural Access Licence	3.7.1 Build broader awareness of cultural access entitlements among all stakeholders to expand the use of the Murrumbidgee Cultural Access Licence.	NSW DCCEEW – Water

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

Priority 4

Manage water sustainably in the Upper Murrumbidgee catchment

Action	Funded sub-actions	Lead
Action 4.2: Support on-going river restoration activities in the Upper Murrumbidgee catchment	4.2.1 Seek ongoing funding by the Australian Government and contributions of NSW-funding towards catchment-improvement activities in the Upper Murrumbidgee catchment.	NSW DCCEEW – CPHR
	4.2.2 Investigate improvements to fish passage and conservation re-stocking as per Action 2.3: Mitigate the impact of infrastructure on native fish, through the federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water Restoring the Upper Murrumbidgee River Program.	NSW DCCEEW – CPHR DPIRD – Local Land Services
	4.2.3 Undertake landscape-function restoration and soil-conservation activities in priority areas to reduce the input of sediment and faecal indicator bacteria (which severely restrict the use of the river for recreation and the quality of the water for stock and domestic use), through the federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water Restoring the Upper Murrumbidgee River Program.	DPIRD – Local Land Services
	4.2.4 Undertake weed and pest animal management, through the federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water Restoring the Upper Murrumbidgee River Program.	DPIRD – Local Land Services
	4.2.5 Continue to assess the stocking of trout in the Upper Murrumbidgee River. ⁶	DPIRD – Fisheries

6. For more information about the conservation stocking program for Trout cod in the Upper Murrumbidgee River visit: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/threatened-species/current-threatened-species-projects/current-projects-on-trout-cod

Action	Funded sub-actions	Lead
Action 4.3: Improve the flow regime for the Upper Murrumbidgee River	<p>4.3.1 Seek opportunities to undertake studies to address key scientific knowledge gaps concerning river health through the federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water Restoring the Upper Murrumbidgee River Program.</p> <p>For this sub-action, involve local research organisations, community and Aboriginal groups to harness local knowledge and expertise.</p> <p>Advocate for ongoing funding by the Australian Government and contributions of NSW Government funding.</p>	NSW DCCEEW – CPHR
	<p>4.3.2 Design a program to identify and record significant water dependant cultural sites in line with Action 2.7, through the federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water Restoring the Upper Murrumbidgee River Program.</p>	NSW DCCEEW – CPHR
	<p>4.3.3 Actively participate in the review of the Snowy Water Inquiry Outcomes Implementation Deed (SWIOID) 2002 led by the Australian Government to explore changes to the flow regime of the Upper Murrumbidgee River that will improve environmental and cultural outcomes.</p>	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	<p>4.3.4 Investigate operational improvements in environmental water management including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introducing carry-over allocations for 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 improve the ability to release environmental flows, such as increased outlet capacity of Tantangara Dam that would be of sufficient capacity to give effect to any increased flows arising from a review into the SWIOID. Plus, infrastructure improvements to montane river systems to allow more flexible management of releases between the montane streams and Upper Murrumbidgee • coordination of environmental water deliveries with the ACT. 	NSW DCCEEW – Water NSW DCCEEW – CPHR

Action	Funded sub-actions	Lead
Action 4.3: Improve the flow regime for the Upper Murrumbidgee River (continued)	<p>4.3.7 Through the federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water Restoring the Upper Murrumbidgee River Program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • undertake monitoring to understand the response of riverine ecosystems to improved management and ecological condition because of Action 4.2: Support on-going river restoration activities in the Upper Murrumbidgee catchment and Action 4.3: Improve the flow regime for the Upper Murrumbidgee River • seek ongoing funding by the Australian Government and contributions of NSW Government funding for monitoring to understand the response of riverine ecosystems to improved management and ecological condition because of Action 4.2: Support on-going river restoration activities in the Upper Murrumbidgee catchment and Action 4.3: Improve the flow regime for the Upper Murrumbidgee River. 	
Action 4.4: Address pressures to sustainable population growth in the Upper Murrumbidgee catchment	<p>4.4.1 Work with Queanbeyan–Palerang, Snowy Monaro regional Council and Yass Valley councils to identify and implement agreed priorities that address water-security and infrastructure provision and allocation.</p>	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	<p>4.4.2 Under the Head of Agreement between ACT and NSW explore improvements to interjurisdictional management arrangements in the Upper Murrumbidgee region relating to urban water supply including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • investigating solutions for the provision of cross-border water supplies in areas where water supply is a major limitation to housing growth • promoting a consistent approach to the assessment of climate risk and climate adaptation to strengthen water security in the Upper Murrumbidgee region • improving the integration of cross-border water resource planning and management • considering how any changes to the operation of Tantangara Dam under proposed Action 4.3: Improve the flow regime for the Upper Murrumbidgee River could integrate with any needs or proposals under this action (while ensuring any effect on the environmental benefits of the flow regime are considered and mitigated) • considering opportunities for streamlining costs and constraints for local councils to meet different environmental regulations implemented in the NSW and the ACT jurisdictions. 	NSW DCCEEW – Water
	<p>4.4.3 Develop a cross-border regional framework for sustainable growth in the Upper Murrumbidgee to facilitate mutual benefits and provide greater certainty for developers, communities and governments alike.</p>	NSW DPHI – Planning NSW Office of the Cross Border Commissioner

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the Environment and Water