

Outcomes from consultation

The NSW Government has agreed to develop water resource plans as part of the implementation of the Murray–Darling Basin Plan 2012.

Water resource plans (WRPs) demonstrate how the Basin states and territory of NSW, Victoria, Queensland and the ACT coordinate their water management with the federal government's Basin Plan, including how the sustainable diversion limits set in the Basin Plan will be met.

As part of the planning process, the draft Intersecting Streams Surface WRP package, and proposed amendments to the existing water sharing plan (WSP), was publicly exhibited from 22 July 2019 to 31 August 2019.

Three public meetings were held in August 2019, with stakeholder attendance as follows: Bourke (30), Lightning Ridge (14) and Goodooga (25).

Stakeholders provided valuable feedback that helped us develop the final versions of water resource plan and water sharing plans.

This factsheet outlines the main changes since public exhibition.

Submissions

There were four written submissions on the draft Intersecting Streams Surface WRP package, with 15 specific issues raised for consideration.

How submissions were considered

NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment examined the nature of the issues raised and considered:

- Whether the issues were within the scope of water resource planning
- The consistency of any proposed changes with the principles and requirements of the Basin Plan
- The consistency of any proposed changes with the principles set by the NSW Government for water resource planning, and
- Any statutory, technical or administrative barriers to further considering is proposed changes.

In particular, we considered the following questions for each issue or suggestion:

- Is it likely to have an impact on water availability or how water is distributed to access licences of different categories or within a category, and if so, how?
- Is it likely to result in a net reduction in planned environmental water?
- Can current statutory mechanisms enable the change, or is legislative change required?
- Is it consistent with current policy settings, and if not, is development of robust alternative policies feasible within the timeframe to develop the water resource plan?
- Are there additional costs for the NSW Government?
- Is it cost neutral for NSW water licence holders and if not, what is the cost implication?
- Does it relate to water sharing, charges, operational activities or licensing matters outside of the scope of the water resource plan?

- Are there existing programs or processes or other departments addressing the issue?
- Is its full investigation feasible within the timeframe of developing the water resource plan?
- Does it set a precedent for other water resource plans?

Water sharing plan drafting

Water sharing plans are part of legislative tools for water management in NSW. Over time legal drafting conventions have changed and these are reflected in the updates to the plans.

It should be noted that:

- provisions and notes in the plan cannot be inconsistent with the Act
- to avoid inconsistency, where the power is contained in an Act, it should not be repeated in the water sharing plan
- the plan cannot fetter the Minister's decision-making powers

Changes since public consultation

The water resource plan, water sharing plan and supporting documents have been aligned to ensure consistency between the documents, following initial feedback from MDBA and legal review.

General changes to the water sharing plan

- The water sharing plan objectives were revised to address comments raised in submissions, and to better align with strategies and performance indicators. The objectives identify what the rules in the plan are trying to achieve and specify what will be used to measure the performance of the plan when it is evaluated. Minor changes to wording in the exhibited draft plan were made and the references to the 'Long Term Water Plans' and Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting plan in the notes to the plan objectives were removed
- Provisions relating to sustainable diversion limit compliance have been amended to clarify that the compliance process will follow the requirements of the Basin Plan.
- The Dictionary has been updated to ensure all definitions referred to in the plan are included.
- Other minor amendments have been made to clarify the intent of clauses and remove ambiguity.

Changes to Intersecting Streams Unregulated Water Sharing Plan

The following changes have been made:

- The water sharing plan was amended to allow for interstate trade between NSW and Qld if demand from water users is determined and appropriate administrative arrangements are in place.
- An amendment provision has been added to enable active management of environmental water in the future, should NSW determine this is feasible.

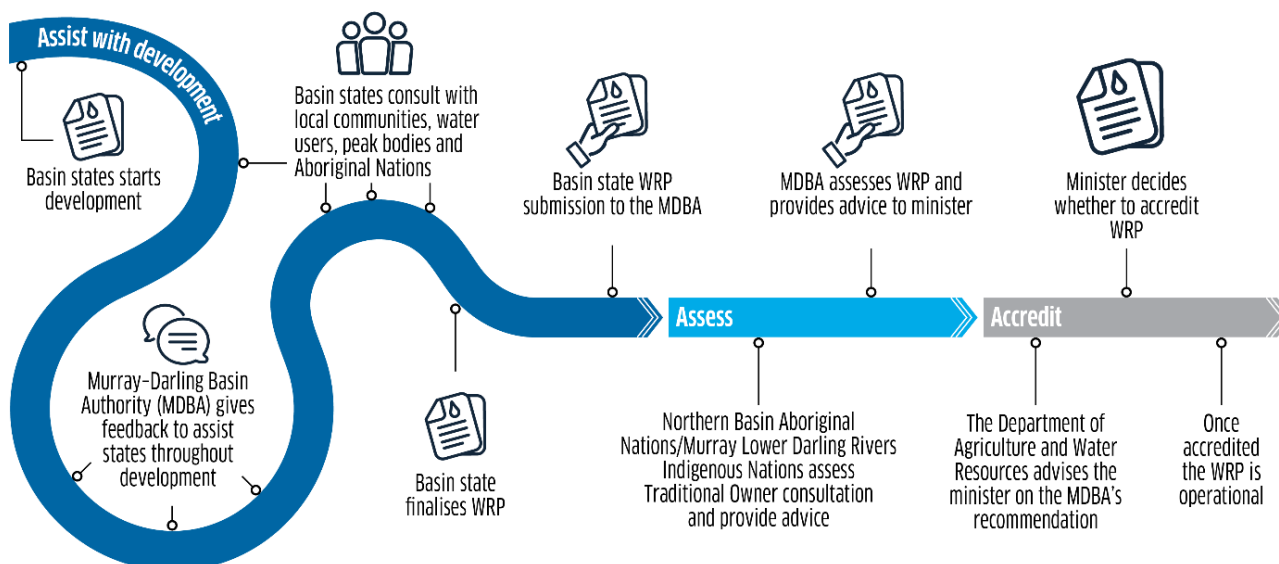
Next Steps – Plan accreditation

The Murray–Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) formally assesses the water resource plan against the requirements in Chapter 10 of the Basin Plan. The Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations (NBAN) will also review the plan against the requirements in Part 14 of Chapter 10 of the Basin Plan and provide its advice to the federal Minister. Both these will inform the minister’s decision on whether to accredit the water resource plan. The draft plan can be accessed on the MDBA website.

Following the MDBA’s assessment, the federal minister responsible for water will review the plan and determine whether it meets the Basin Plan requirements for accreditation.

The accredited plan will be uploaded to MDBA’s website.

Figure 1. Water resource plan accreditation process



More information

The draft Intersecting Streams Water Resource Plan and fact sheets are available from the department’s website.

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