

March 2022 | ISSUE #33

## Message to our readers

We have all been moved by the devastating effects of floods across NSW and Queensland in recent weeks. Our thoughts are with all those affected by these events.

The NSW Government provides financial relief and support for eligible primary producers following a natural disaster. You can find out more by using the [Disaster Assistance Finder](#) – an online questionnaire that will provide a personalised list of available programs and services.

You can find more information on the [Service NSW](#) website about the range of support available to disaster-affected communities.

## Reconnecting River Country Program reach expanded



The Reconnecting River Country Program can now reach more stakeholders than ever before thanks to the launch of its first virtual consultation space.

The new online space will complement existing on ground consultation while providing thousands of stakeholders with the most up-to-date information in real-time. Through the virtual space we're giving landholders the opportunity to complete an online case study at any time, from anywhere, with the click of a button.

The Reconnecting River Country Program spans more than a hundred rural communities across the Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers, and this new online platform builds on our face-to-face meetings by allowing us to reach even more members of the community.

Using both online and field-based case studies will allow landholders to provide feedback on the benefits and impacts of different flow options, identify assets on their property, view inundation maps and validate modelling.

The virtual space is initially for the proposed works on the Murrumbidgee River and features engagement surveys, animations, photography, presentations, and interactive maps.

The Reconnecting River Country Program is working closely with communities on the Murray and Murrumbidgee to improve wetland and floodplain connectivity while balancing economic, social, cultural and environmental outcomes.

Learn more about the [Reconnecting River Country Program](#) on our website.

Explore the [new consultation virtual space](#).

## Help inform the Landholder Negotiation Framework for the Reconnecting River Country Program



Water Infrastructure NSW is seeking comment from affected landholders, industry bodies and communities to help develop a Landholder Negotiation Framework for the Reconnecting River Country Program.

The program will likely mean changes to river management in the southern-

connected Basin, meaning at times low-level inundation of some areas will occur.

We are developing the framework to ensure a transparent, equitable, fair and consistent approach to negotiating agreements for impact mitigation with affected landholders.

Community members and stakeholders are invited to provide a written submission on a discussion paper about the framework by midnight (AEST) 15 April 2022.

For more information visit [the webpage](#), email [RRCP.LNF@dpie.nsw.gov.au](mailto:RRCP.LNF@dpie.nsw.gov.au) or call 1300 081 047.

## Innovation award for Gayini Nimmie-Caira project



The department has won a prestigious Australian Water Association (AWA) award for the innovative Gayini Nimmie-Caira project, taking out the Infrastructure Project Innovation (Regional) category in the NSW state awards.

Set in the lower reaches of the Murrumbidgee River floodplain in southwest NSW, the Gayini Nimmie-Caira project rehabilitated vital wetland areas and provided important cultural, environmental and social benefits for both the community and the state. The project was a key part of implementing the Murray-Darling Basin Plan for NSW, with investments from both the NSW and Australian governments.

To complete the project, nearly 85,000 hectares of land was purchased from 11 landholders, along with supplementary water entitlements providing an average annual yield of 173 gigalitres. This water has now been returned to the environment to help protect over 10,000 hectares of floodplain wetlands, including habitat and foraging areas for threatened species and migratory birds.

The project area is now run by the Nari Nari Tribal Council, which sustainably manages and conserves it for the benefit of people and nature. The local surrounding areas also benefited from the project, with a new Gayini Nimmie-Caira module at Balranald Discovery Centre, new employment opportunities, and road maintenance and bridge replacement to improve access to the area.

Read more about the [Gayini Nimmie-Caira project](#).

## Award nomination for upgrading Malabugilmah water supply



The department's Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program (ACWSP) was also recognised at the NSW branch of the Australian Water Association Awards in the Infrastructure Project Innovation (Regional) category. The ACWSP, along with Clarence Valley Council, NSW Health and Ledonne Construction were nominated for their project upgrading the Malabugilmah water supply.

The project included upgrading the water treatment plant with ultrafiltration membranes and stabilising the nearby riverbank to reduce turbidity (cloudiness) and improve water quality. As a result of the upgrades, Malabugilmah has a sustainable water supply with clean, safe, and reliable drinking water. The project was considered innovative due to the deep collaboration with the local Aboriginal community, and has produced positive local cultural and social outcomes.

Malabugilmah is just one of the 63 Aboriginal communities that the ACWSP team works with to improve water supply and sewage services.

Learn more about the [Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program](#).

## Non-urban metering



## Do you need to comply? Check the rules and meter your supply.

Are you a water user in the southern inland region? The non-urban water metering rules may apply to you.

The rollout date for water users in the southern inland region is 1 December 2022. There may be lead times to order and receive the necessary equipment and book installation and validation. We encourage you to follow the steps below to find out if the metering rules apply to you, and what you need to do to comply.

1. Check your licence and approval details on the [NSW Water Register](#) to see what's listed and if there are any existing metering conditions you need to comply with now. WaterNSW can assist you to [amend your approval](#) if you need to update details such as the size of your installed pump or to make your work inactive.
2. Use our interactive online [metering guidance tool](#) to see if, and how, the rules apply to you.
3. Contact a duly qualified person (DQP), such as a certified meter installer, to discuss your situation. You can find a list of DQPs on [Irrigation Australia's website](#).

For more information visit [our website](#), or attend one of our information sessions described below.

## Non-urban metering southern inland information sessions

If you are a water user in the southern inland region, you may need to comply with the non-urban water metering rules by 1 December 2022.

The NSW Government is holding information sessions on the non-urban metering requirements to help you understand whether the new metering rules apply to you and how to comply. You will also be able to ask questions to a panel from the department, WaterNSW and the Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR).

Trade stalls will be held after the information sessions so you can meet and connect with some of the metering suppliers and installers working in NSW. Panel members and departmental staff will also be available to speak to you.

Follow the links below to register for information sessions:

- Albury – Tuesday 26 April, 11 am - 2 pm
- Deniliquin – Wednesday 27 April, 10 am – 1 pm
- Griffith – Thursday 28 April, 10 am – 1 pm
- Online – Thursday 5 May, 10 am – 12 pm
- Broken Hill – Tuesday 17 May, 10 am – 1 pm
- Dareton – Wednesday 18 May, 9 am – 12 pm

For more information about non-urban metering, visit the department's website.



## Are you in a telemetry coverage blackspot and required to meter your works?

You may be eligible for a temporary exemption. Temporary exemptions may apply for works that are required to connect to telemetry under the non-urban metering rules, but cannot because they are in a site that does not receive network coverage.

Water users or duly qualified persons can use the department's [telemetry coverage tool](#) to identify whether a site is within network coverage.

To generate the telemetry coverage report you will need the:

- property owner's name
- work approval number

- ESID—this is a unique 'extraction site' number for a specific work on your work approval. For this purpose, it is your metered work. The ESID can be obtained in the Water Accounting System ([iWAS](#)) or by contacting WaterNSW on 1300 662 077
- latitude/longitude of meter location—to at least 6 decimal places (you can get these coordinates from Google maps and most smart mobile phones if you are on-site).

For more information and to generate a telemetry coverage report visit the department's [website](#).

## MHL investigates offshore artificial fishing reef coastal processes



*Image credit: Department of Primary Industries - Fisheries*

Manly Hydraulics Laboratory (MHL) carried out investigations for the Department of Primary Industries – Fisheries to assess the impact of installation of offshore artificial fishing reefs on local coastal processes.

Since 2011 the Department of Primary Industries – Fisheries has installed eight artificial reefs to improve recreational fishing opportunities off the NSW coast. The Department of Primary Industries – Fisheries team focused on the ecological aspects while MHL focused on the coastal processes and the engineering.

MHL has prepared reports on coastal processes for artificial reefs off Merimbula, Tweed coast, Batemans coast, Forster and most recently Terrigal.

Installing artificial reefs can have adverse effects on nearby beaches if they are not installed properly. This is because they can change local wave patterns, and either deposit or erode sand.

MHL determined that the Terrigal artificial reef can be safely deployed in a water depth of 45 metres and will have no impact on nearby Avoca Beach or the historical shipwreck 'Galava'.

Learn more by visiting the Manly Hydraulics Laboratory [website](#) and viewing the [MHL library](#).

## Managing decline in groundwater levels



We recently published reports on how groundwater levels have been changing since the 1970s and 80s across 29 inland alluvial groundwater systems. Our hydrogeologists analysed data from 1,300 groundwater sites to look at how deep the groundwater levels fall during the summer irrigation season and how much they recover when the bore pumps are turned off during winter.

Generally, the fluctuation was within acceptable levels of decline and recovery. However, in some areas, we found that in concentrated areas of pumping, groundwater levels cannot fully recover before the following irrigation season starts. We have prepared a [short report \(PDF\)](#) where this occurs.

We also published three reports on groundwater in the Upper and Lower Namoi, the Lower Gwydir and the Upper Lachlan, as these areas are showing a long-term decline.

Several public sessions were held in these regions during March to provide locals with information on groundwater management options to address these declines.

You can have your say on the reports and the presentations until Friday, 8 April.

Find out more on [our website](#).

## Proposed changes to groundwater access rules for the Lower Darling Alluvial Groundwater Source 2020





We are currently seeking stakeholder views on removing a rule that prohibits most aquifer access licence holders taking water from the Lower Darling Alluvial Groundwater Source unless water is used for irrigating perennial horticulture (orchards and vineyards).

Removing subclause 37 (3)(a) from the Water Sharing Plan will allow licence holders to use the water for other purposes, as a critical water supply during dry times when surface water availability is low. This change will ensure licences remain usable as most licence holders have removed perennial plantings.

As extraction limits and all other access rules remain the same, water for the environment is maintained.

Interested parties are encouraged to have their say on the proposed change to the water sharing plan during the public consultation period which runs from 1 March to midnight of 10 April 2022.

Further details can be found here [website](#).

## Murray hardyhead thriving at Wingilli Station



*The threatened Murray hardyhead are thriving in southwest NSW. Image credit: Department of Primary Industries - Fisheries.*

On a remote Murray River station in southwest NSW lies the Little Frenchman's Creek. It's a 4 kilometre long oasis for a threatened but tenacious little native fish – the Murray hardyhead. The story of this population of threatened fish begins in 2018 with around 800 individuals relocated to the creek from a South Australian Riverland wetland, where a natural population is cared for.

Fast forward to 2022, and these little fish have been detected in the hundreds of thousands! Helped along by consecutive years of environmental flows, productivity in the Murray River channel has been 'booming' in 2021 and 2022. When flows jumped overbank into the Little Frenchman's Creek earlier this year because of wetter conditions, Murray hardyhead benefited from the extra nutrients and multiplied over summer at an incredible rate.

High flows and increased river connectivity across parts of the Lower Murray floodplain may have also allowed dispersal of Murray hardyhead into neighbouring creeks and wetlands.

Learn more about the NSW Department of Primary Industries' [current Murray hardyhead projects](#) and stay in touch with the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

## Planning data sent to local water utilities

The department's water utilities Data Management & Analytics team has started generating planning data sets for all the local water utilities in Regional NSW.

The planning data sets contain validated historical annual performance data gathered over the period from 1994-95 to 2019-20. This information can be used by a local water utility to make critical business decisions around strategic planning and pricing. The data includes topics like assets, customers, environment, financial, health, pricing and water data.

Our Town Water Risk Reduction Program is also working to improve the performance monitoring of the sector. This will help streamline monitoring, identify trends in performance, and ensure we can address challenges as they arise. This includes a review of the performance indicators collected by local water utilities.

Recipients of planning data sets can send feedback to [LWU.PerformanceReporting@dpie.nsw.gov.au](mailto:LWU.PerformanceReporting@dpie.nsw.gov.au)

Learn more about the Town Water Risk Reduction Program on our website.

## New on the Water website

- [Water presentations library](#). This library consists of webinars and presentations that cover a range of topics across the water sector from 2020 until today.
- [Water meetings library](#). This library consists of public meeting minutes that cover a range of topics across the water sector.

These libraries are an easy way to find information, part of our commitment to being more transparent and accountable, [priority 1 of the NSW Water Strategy](#).

## Have your say

Current and upcoming consultations and information events:

### **1 March – 10 April**

[Proposed changes to groundwater access rules for the Lower Darling Alluvial Groundwater Source 2020](#)

### **7 March – 15 April**

Reconnecting River Country Program

[Landholder negotiation framework development consultations](#)

### **5 April**

Wilcannia Weir Replacement Project

[Information session](#)

### **26 April – 18 May**

Non-urban water metering information sessions

Albury – [Tuesday 26 April, 11 am to 2 pm](#)

Deniliquin – [Wednesday 27 April, 10 am to 1 pm](#)

Griffith – [Thursday 28 April, 10 am to 1 pm](#)

Online – [Thursday 5 May, 10 am to 12 pm](#)

Broken Hill – [Tuesday 17 May, 10 am to 1 pm](#)

Dareton – [Wednesday 18 May, 9 am to 12 pm](#)

[Water Engagement Roundup](#) - this monthly webinar provides updates on current consultation and engagement about important water policy and programs. Find the dates for upcoming sessions and recordings of past webinars on [our website](#).

[View all](#)

## Latest water news from the department

- [Waterways to boost green spaces and cool the West](#)
- [Pipeline delivers increased water security for Coonabarabran](#)
- [Opportunity to obtain Water Access Licences](#)

[View all](#)

Follow us on Twitter for more updates

## Contact us

Water News is our monthly update on water planning, management and reform in NSW. If you have any questions or feedback contact us at:

NSW Government – Water Relations  
Phone 1300 081 047  
[water.relations@dpie.nsw.gov.au](mailto:water.relations@dpie.nsw.gov.au)

Subscribe to Water News

[View previous newsletters](#)



Department of Planning and Environment, Dharug Country, 4 Parramatta Square, 12 Darcy Street,  
Parramatta, NSW 2150

[Unsubscribe](#) [Manage preferences](#)