



# Yanco Creek System

**Sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism projects**

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## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN**

For projects delivered by the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment under the sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism (SDLAM) of the Murray-Darling *Basin Plan 2012*, with funding from the Australian Government's Department of Agriculture.



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Agriculture**

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## Acknowledgement of Country

The NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment acknowledges that First Nations peoples are the traditional custodians of the Murray-Darling Basin. The department pays respect to Elders past, present and future and acknowledges their deep cultural, social, environmental, spiritual and economic connection to their lands and waters. We also recognise the unique, diverse and enduring knowledge of First Nations peoples.

## Yanco Creek and Tributaries Advisory Council Inc.

We acknowledge the independent and frank advice given by the Yanco Creek and Tributaries Advisory Council Inc. (YACTAC) to help make engagement with the community effective and genuine.

## About this engagement plan

People are understandably interested when changes are proposed to the waterways they use and value. This engagement plan outlines how you can participate and provide feedback in two projects that could affect the Yanco Creek System. The projects are part of the sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism (SDLAM).

The two projects are:

- improved flow management works at the Murrumbidgee River–Yanco Creek offtake
- modernising supply systems for effluent creeks–Murrumbidgee River.

Working together, we will design these projects to deliver the best possible results for stakeholders, and make the largest acceptable contribution to the sustainable diversion limit (SDL) offset for the Murrumbidgee Valley.

The two proposed projects are not a done deal as they are at the concept design stage. This means that alternatives will be investigated, including the option of making no changes at all.

Find information on the Yanco SDLAM projects at [industry.nsw.gov.au/water/plans-programs/water-recovery-programs/sustainable-diversion-limits/yanco-creek](https://industry.nsw.gov.au/water/plans-programs/water-recovery-programs/sustainable-diversion-limits/yanco-creek)

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## About the Yanco Creek System

The Yanco Creek System links two of Australia's largest rivers—the Murrumbidgee and Murray—through over 800 km of interconnected waterways, including:

- Yanco Creek
- Colombo Creek
- Billabong Creek
- Forest Creek

These local waterways support many important uses and values:

- domestic, stock and irrigation water supply for over 180 farms
- town water supply to Morundah, Urana, Oaklands, Jerilderie, Conargo and Wanganella
- First Nations culture and heritage, including opportunities for First Nations peoples to continue spiritual, cultural and traditional connection to Country
- recreation, such as fishing, waterskiing and photography

- historical significance associated with pastoralism and irrigation development
- biodiversity conservation, encompassing important wetlands and populations of threatened species.

The Yanco Creek System commences in the traditional lands of the Wiradjuri people and flows through Bangerang, Barrapa Barapa and Wemba Wemba traditional country. 'Yanggu' is Wiradjuri for 'song of running water', perhaps reflecting that before dams and irrigation, Yanco Creek only connected with the Murrumbidgee River during floods. As the name suggests, Billabong Creek was also regularly reduced to isolated waterholes.

As a result of river regulation, these waterways became permanently flowing streams with sections of still and fast flowing water, and deep and shallow water. Many native plants and animals are now well adapted to the new water regime.

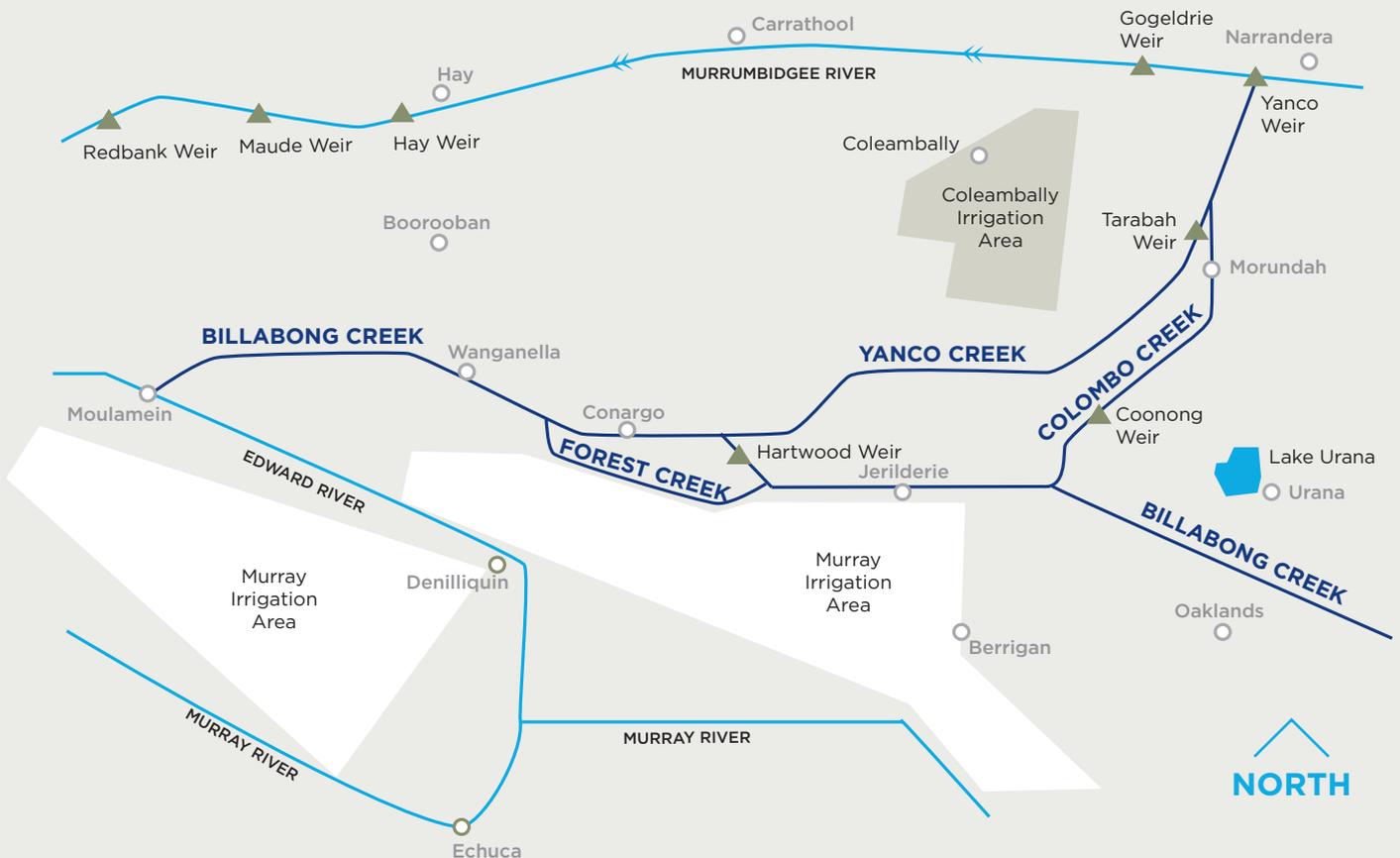


Figure 1: Yanco Creek system

## What we have heard so far

In September 2019 we asked for your feedback on the draft Community Engagement Plan.

Over 130 people gave their time to provide written submissions and attend drop-in sessions, helping us to better understand community concerns and ideas on the two projects.

The table below summarises how we have responded to your feedback.

**Table 1: Our response to your feedback**

YOU SAID...	OUR RESPONSE
<b>We need more time to understand the projects</b>	We are looking to extend Stage 1 by up to 12 months so we can undertake more community engagement (see Table 2)
<b>Meet more regularly with us</b>	We will hold community drop-in sessions every six months
<b>Be better prepared to answer questions</b>	All team members will strive to attend drop-in sessions in future
<b>Make it easier for people to understand the projects</b>	We will develop better maps and other information products with your input and advice
<b>Improve how you communicate meetings and updates</b>	We will make greater use of advertisements, email and text messaging services
<b>Disclose the water savings of each project</b>	The supply contribution of each project will be communicated
<b>WaterNSW must be better involved</b>	WaterNSW has been invited to participate in all levels of the project
<b>The three advisory groups are a good fit</b>	We will establish three advisory groups to help guide the projects
<b>The engagement plan is too detailed</b>	We will work with the Community Advisory Group to develop a simple summary of the engagement plan that is easier to understand
<b>Pay sitting fees to advisory group members</b>	The department has considered this issue and has decided not to pay sitting fees
<b>Include industry representation on advisory groups</b>	Murray Irrigation and Coleambally Irrigation have agreed to be members of the Technical Advisory Group
<b>Make sure councils are involved</b>	Five councils are represented in the Community Advisory Group
<b>How will you ensure that meetings are inclusive and transparent?</b>	Murray Local Land Services has agreed to provide an independent chairperson for the Community Advisory Group. We will publish the minutes and/or a summary on our website after each meeting.
<b>Allow future community leaders to observe and learn from the advisory groups</b>	We have amended the terms of reference to allow observers for this purpose



## About the SDLAM

The *Basin Plan 2012* defines how much water can be taken from the Murray–Darling Basin while leaving enough to maintain the health of rivers, creeks, lakes and wetlands.

To achieve this balance, the Basin Plan aims to return 2,680 gigalitres of water to the environment—the total recovery target.

The Murray–Darling Basin Authority has determined that 605 gigalitres of the target can be offset through the SDLAM by way of projects that deliver equivalent environmental outcomes without requiring additional water to be removed from productive use.

- ✓ 286 gigalitres of the recovery target can be offset in NSW through the SDLAM
- ✓ 45% of water recovery in NSW has been through infrastructure projects
- ✓ 55% of water recovered in NSW has been through water purchased

The adjustment mechanism could provide an offset of 162 gigalitres in the Murrumbidgee Valley, which would mean that additional water purchases may not be necessary.

**The Water Division of the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment is the NSW lead for SDLAM projects.**

Get information on all SDLAM projects led by us at [industry.nsw.gov.au/water/basins-catchments/murray-darling/supply-efficiency-measures](https://industry.nsw.gov.au/water/basins-catchments/murray-darling/supply-efficiency-measures)

## Working together

We are committed to effective and genuine engagement with the community. By working together we will create better outcomes, improve service delivery and enhance community satisfaction.

### Our approach is:

- holistic—considering social, cultural, economic and environmental factors
- co-designed engagement—designed in partnership with our key stakeholder
- guided by community views—with the formation of advisory groups
- accessible and regular—information will be available in a number of ways
- transparent and accountable—we will be open and answerable to you
- coordinated by a local project team.

## HOLISTIC APPROACH

Our approach will be as holistic as possible by considering social, environmental, economic and cultural factors in all decision-making.

Delivery of the Yanco SDLAM projects will also be open to public scrutiny at every stage and gateway:

- **Stage 1 is pre-construction.** A project agreement for Stage 1 funding was signed by the Australian and NSW governments in February 2019. This funding supports project development activities but not construction. Get information on the funding agreement at <http://federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/npa/environment/project-agreement/SDL-Stage1-NSW.pdf>
- **Stage 2 is construction.** Governments will make an investment decision at the end of Stage 1 on whether to proceed to construction. The community will be informed of the decision, and the reasoning behind it.

Stage 1 is the most important stage for community engagement. The table below summarises the work ahead and the time lines. There will be trade-offs, but with your input and feedback, we hope to strike the right balance.

**Table 2: Stage 1 gateways and deliverables**

	GATEWAY	DESCRIPTION	TIMEFRAME	PROJECT DELIVERABLES	
Stage 1 pre-construction	0	Initiation	By the end of 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Community engagement plan</li> </ul> <p><b>WE ARE HERE</b></p>	
	1	Strategic options	By April 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Service need definition</li> <li>✓ Options analysis</li> <li>✓ Preliminary cost-benefit analysis</li> </ul>	
	2a	Business case	By April 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Final business case</li> <li>✓ Risk register</li> <li>✓ Detailed cost plan</li> <li>✓ Detailed cost-benefit analysis</li> </ul>	
	2b	Statutory and other approvals	By June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Environmental impact statement</li> <li>✓ Aboriginal cultural heritage impact plan</li> <li>✓ Stage 2 implementation plan</li> </ul>	

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## CO-DESIGNED ENGAGEMENT

Yanco Creek and Tributaries Advisory Council Inc. (YACTAC) has agreed to partner with us to co-design community engagement on the Yanco SDLAM projects to make it purposeful, inclusive, timely, transparent and respectful.

We have identified YACTAC as the projects' key stakeholder and an appropriate partner because the organisation:

- is a long-standing and highly professional group
- represents all water access licence holders on the Yanco Creek System
- is funded by voluntarily contributions to an environmental levy
- has intimate knowledge of local people, water policy and the environment
- has significant interest in and ability to advise on the Yanco SDLAM projects.



## ADVISORY GROUPS

While YACTAC is a key stakeholder, there are many other important groups with an interest in the Yanco Creek System.

To understand and respond to the interests of important stakeholders, three advisory groups will discuss and analyse issues that are most significant to them:

- Yanco Community Advisory Group ([Terms of Reference](#)) [Hyperlink](#)
- Yanco Aboriginal Advisory Group ([Terms of Reference](#)) [Hyperlink](#)
- Yanco Technical Advisory Group. ([Terms of Reference](#)) [Hyperlink](#)

## Important stakeholder groups or organisations that are involved in the advisory groups include:



### COMMUNITY AND INDUSTRY

Yanco Creek and Tributaries Advisory Council Inc.

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South West Anglers Association Inc.

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Creek Country Alliance

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Colombo Creek Ski Club

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Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists

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NSW Farmers Association

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### FIRST NATIONS

Engagement is underway with local First Nations, Aboriginal groups, organisations and community members along the Yanco Creek System and neighbouring Murrumbidgee, Murray and Edward River communities to form the Yanco Aboriginal Advisory Group. The membership of this important advisory group is yet to be determined



### LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Leeton Shire Council

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Murrumbidgee Council

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Federation Council

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Narrandera Shire Council

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Edward River Council

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### AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

Murray–Darling Basin Authority

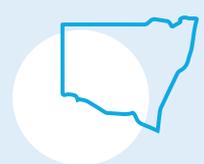
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Commonwealth Environmental Water Office

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Commonwealth Department of Agriculture

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### STATE GOVERNMENT

Department of Planning, Industry and Environment

- » Water Division
- » Environment, Energy and Science Division
- » National Parks and Wildlife Service

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Department of Primary Industries—Fisheries

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Local Land Services

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WaterNSW

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Advisory groups will provide non-binding advice to the department. We will collaborate with them and incorporate their advice into our recommendations and decisions to the greatest possible extent. They will also shape and endorse the indicators we use to measure success and the targets we aspire to reach.

Members will be responsible for bringing messages to and from advisory groups and their own constituents.

Over the next two to three years, the advisory groups will provide advice based on best available technology and information, and for a range of purposes, including:

- water modelling
- options analysis
- social, cultural and environmental impact assessments
- design specifications and costings
- operating rule development
- statutory approvals.



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## REGULAR COMMUNITY CONTACT

Our engagement approach will include regular contact with the community and opportunities for people to review and comment on project deliverables at each stage. We will provide access to relevant information and opportunities for all interested people to be kept fully informed and have a say.

We will organise and advertise drop-in sessions with the project team and provide avenues for online and written submissions.



## Our engagement approach



### Facilitate advisory groups to identify

- ✓ opportunities to be explored
- ✓ problems to be solved
- ✓ decisions to be made



### Provide information to the community and seek community feedback on drafts and proposals through

- ✓ an accessible and informative website
- ✓ advertised consultation periods
- ✓ drop-in community sessions
- ✓ online and written submissions



### Analyse and consider all community feedback by

- ✓ listening to and acknowledging concerns and aspirations every six months
- ✓ taking into account new ideas and alternative views



### Publish decisions and the impact of community engagement to

- ✓ be answerable for decisions
- ✓ communicate how community feedback affected the decision

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## TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

We will regularly compare what we proposed to do with actual activities, and make it easy for you to see and understand your impact on major decisions.

We will provide transparency by:

- faithfully recording what stakeholders say
- engaging independent facilitators and reviewers
- openly sharing information and results
- celebrating progress and success with stakeholders.

We will be accountable by:

- doing what we say we will do
- measuring and making the effect of community engagement visible to stakeholders
- setting clear measures of progress and success
- publicly reporting our performance.

## LOCAL PROJECT TEAM

We have established a project team that is accessible and approachable, and with relevant skills and experiences in areas such community and Aboriginal engagement, civil engineering and environmental impact assessment.

YACTAC has also agreed to be an independent and objective source of information to the community about the Yanco SDLAM projects.



# Yanco Creek System

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## Local contact details

### Water Division of the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment



#### DAVID LESLIE

Principal Project Officer. David lives in Deniliquin and has 30 years' experience in forestry, community engagement, catchment management and irrigation.



#### DAVID CLARKE

Senior Project Officer. David lives in Deniliquin and has expertise in river operations and over 20 years' experience working with local communities.



#### ROD HARDWICK

Senior Project Officer. Rod lives at Albury and has over 20 years' experience in environmental management and community engagement.



#### DAN HUTTON

Senior Project Officer. Dan lives at Deniliquin and has worked in remote and regional communities for over 30 years in land, environmental and water management and community engagement.

## Local contact details

### NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment

Phone: 03 5881 9900

Email: [yanco.sdlprogram@industry.nsw.gov.au](mailto:yanco.sdlprogram@industry.nsw.gov.au)

# Yanco Creek System

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## Yanco Creek and Tributaries Advisory Council Inc.



### **BOB CRAWFORD**

President. Bob has been involved in farming, local government and catchment management for 50 years. He has also served on various state panels, the Community Consultative Committee of the MDBC, and was the inaugural chairman and CEO of the Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Trust.



### **MARK WETTENHALL**

Vice President. Mark's grandfather came to the Jerilderie district to manage Coree Station and the family has been here ever since. Mark is a third-generation farmer, holds a Bachelor of Rural Science Honours and has been a YACTAC committee member for 20 years.



### **TANYA THOMPSON**

Executive Officer. Tanya has lived in the district since 1990 and holds various qualifications in teaching, business and management and AICD director training. Tanya has been advocating for local community groups for over 25 years.



### **DR DALE MCNEIL**

Environment Manager. Dale is an experienced ecological researcher and natural resource manager. He has worked for over twenty years in scientific research and NRM programs. He has provided expert ecological advice to regional, state and Australian government agencies, ministers and other clients. He is also experienced in catchment and regional planning, social values assessments, and community consultation and facilitation.

### **Local contact details**

#### **Yanco Creek and Tributaries Advisory Council Inc. (YACTAC)**

**Phone:** 0408 833 801

**Email:** [yactac.tanya@outlook.com](mailto:yactac.tanya@outlook.com)