

May 2022 | ISSUE #35

## Wilcannia Weir Replacement Project creating local employment opportunities



The NSW and Australian Governments are working with the Wilcannia community to increase local opportunities from the construction of the Wilcannia Weir Replacement Project.

In late 2021, local jobs were created during the first stage of construction to upgrade Union Bend Road. The works to upgrade the road from dirt to gravel will support the trucks and machinery to build Wilcannia's new weir. Eventually, this will become the main access road to the site.

Ten of the locals employed on the road upgrade recently graduated from Wilcannia's TAFE NSW campus, with support from Water Infrastructure NSW. Some of the locals involved in this education and training spoke to us about what these opportunities meant to them and the people of Wilcannia.

[Watch the video to hear about the recent works and how we are supporting employment in the Wilcannia region.](#)

## Large water users' licence approvals move from NRAR to Department of Planning and Environment



*River Red Gums Eucalyptus Camaldulensis on the banks of Murray River. Credit: Peter Robey-DPE.*

Service delivery to the state's largest water users has been simplified, with the responsibility for the management and approval of their water licences and approvals moving from the Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) to the Department of Planning and Environment.

The department is also managing all integrated development referrals for works on waterfront land and applications for controlled activity approvals. The transfer aligns licensing approvals more closely with the technical, scientific and water planning expertise within the department's water group.

WaterNSW will continue managing water licences and approvals for all other water users in NSW, while NRAR continues to oversee all water users' compliance with NSW water rules. All water users can use the [Water Assist tool](#) to find more information about how to apply for a water approval or licence.

[Visit the new licensing and approvals webpage for more information.](#)

## Harvestable rights increase in coastal-draining catchments



Coastal farmers and landholders now have greater water security from the NSW Government's increase to harvestable rights in coastal-draining catchments.

Landholders can now capture up to 30 per cent of the average annual rainfall runoff from their properties in dams without needing to hold a water access licence or water approval. This will help farmers and landholders to better prepare for droughts. The additional water can only be used for stock watering, domestic use and certain types of agriculture.

As each catchment has different characteristics, water uses and needs, from 2022 the Department of Planning and Environment will assess each coastal-draining catchment to determine if the new limit is appropriate at the local level. Depending on the results of the assessments, the limit may change for some catchments.

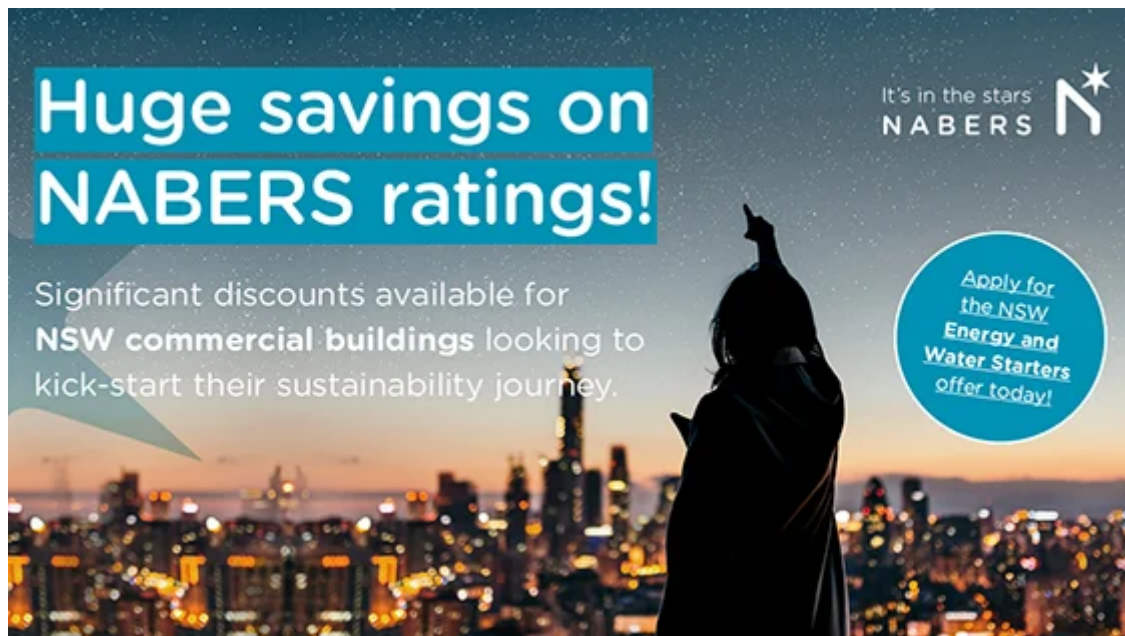
Landholders planning to construct dams to make use of the new limit may wish to wait for the assessments to be complete to ensure their new dams are of a permissible size. Dams exceeding the permitted size will be required to be modified at the landholder's expense.

Landholders need to notify the department before taking up the option to expand their harvestable right dam capacity above the previous 10 per cent limit. This will help keep track of the growth in harvestable rights dams, and ensure water is managed appropriately.

You can assess the maximum harvestable dam capacity for your property using the new [WaterNSW Maximum Harvestable Right Dam Capacity Calculator](#).

For more information on coastal harvestable rights, and the assessments, visit our [webpage here](#).

NABERS Water Starters offer helps building owners get rated



*Credit: NABERS.*

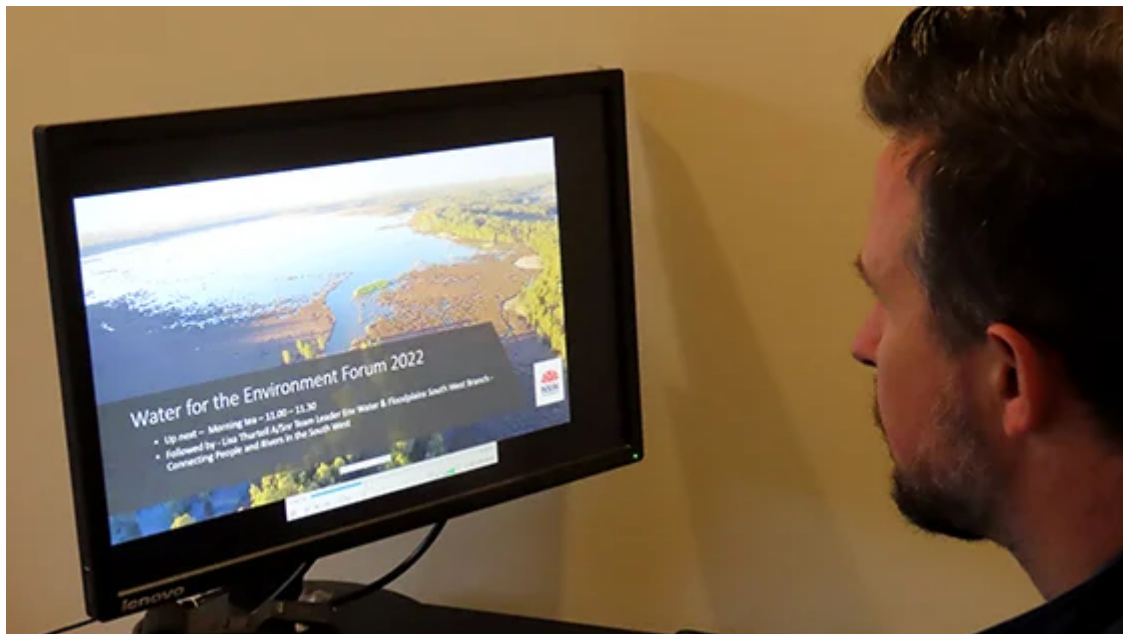
The NSW Government is excited to partner with the National Australian Built Environment Rating System (NABERS) to support NSW building owners to get a first-time water rating.

A NABERS rating lets you know how your building is performing against similar building types. Under the offer, buildings receiving their first rating can access up to \$1,500 towards a 1st and 2nd year rating and action plan for water. Savings up to \$4,500 are available if bundled with the Energy Starters offer.

The offer is available for a range of building types, including office buildings, hotels, data centres, shopping centres, apartment buildings, residential aged care and retirement living.

Find out more about the [Energy and Water Starters offer](#), or access NABERS factsheets on building types and rules [here](#).

Connecting people and place with water for the environment



'Connecting People and Place' was the theme for this year's Water for the Environment Forum. Over 50 people joined the online forum to hear from speakers about the work to deliver environmental flows to the NSW rivers and wetlands where it is needed most.

Participants heard from water managers who work with landholders, First Nations, community groups, scientists, and state and federal agencies to support the recovery and restoration of critical habitats for water-dependent wildlife. Topics included landscape scale river management, site specific landholder partnerships, monitoring of wildlife responses, and current projects to improve the long-term health of rivers and floodplains.

The forum was also an opportunity to share the outcomes for native fish, waterbird, frog and habitat for watering events across the catchments and answer questions about many river-related topics.

[Learn more about water for the environment and the event.](#)

## New tools for submissions for major groundwater projects



New guidelines to help guide submissions for state significant development (SSD) and state significant infrastructure (SSI) projects affecting groundwater are now available.

Applicants making submissions for SSD and SSI projects need to show how they meet requirements of the *Water Management Act 2000* and other NSW groundwater policy. To make the requirements as clear as possible, the department has prepared a series of guidelines to help ensure submissions include the necessary information needed for assessment. This will result in shorter approval time for applicants and improve efficiency for all involved.

The guidelines include information on how to address potential impacts and risks, and water licensing requirements. The guidelines also outline the data needed to demonstrate a proposed activity is compliant or support site characterisation.

The distinct phases of a project are covered, as are specific requirements for various types of developments. The guidelines complement existing industry requirements and were created in consultation with industry experts.

[For more information visit our website.](#)

## The pelican brief



*Pelican colony at Lake Brewster, Lachlan. Credit: Warren Chad*

With most lakes, dams and wetlands full and aquatic life booming, pelicans have come to inland NSW to feed and breed.

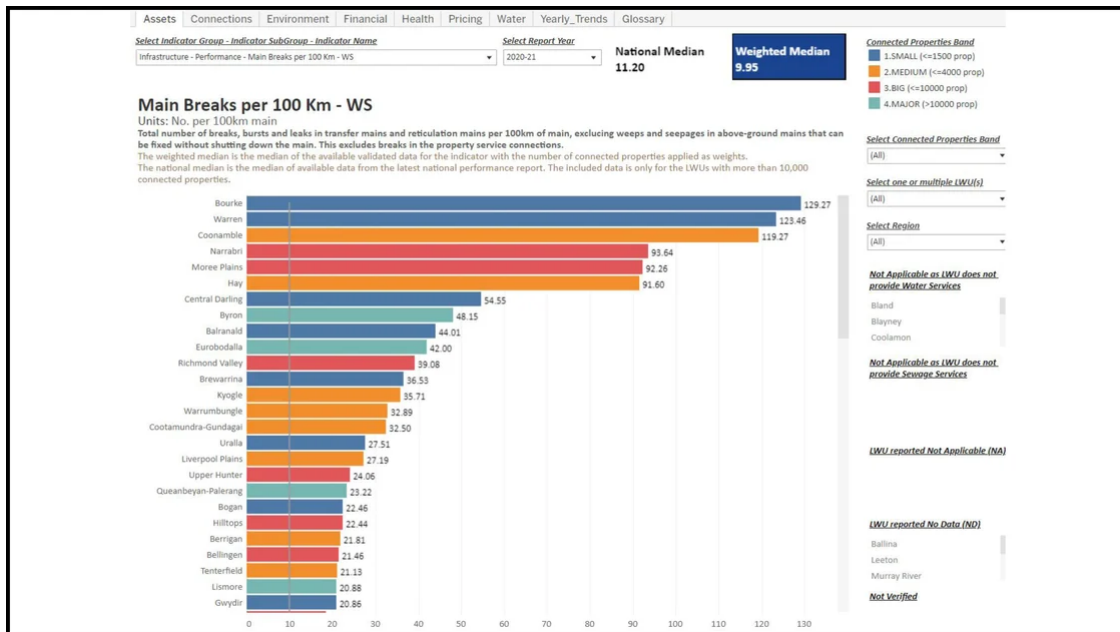
Pelicans like to breed in large groups (called colonies) and nest on ground surrounded by water to protect their chicks from predators. Two large colonies of many thousands of pelicans have been nesting in the bottom reaches of the Lachlan and Murrumbidgee rivers.

Environmental water holders have been working with scientists, water managers and First Nations to keep water levels stable at breeding sites. If water-levels go too high the chicks can be drowned; too low and the nests are exposed to predators.

It is also vital that nests are in an area with a ready supply of food, as it takes 4 months for chicks to become totally independent. Pelican chicks can eat up to 900 grams of food each day, while an adult can consume close to 2 kilograms. Their fishy diet is supplemented with tadpoles, turtles and even other birds! Breeding seasons like these are vital for preserving pelican populations across Australia.

You can see more about pelican breeding at an ABC News story [here](#) and follow the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Local Water Utility performance data for 2020-21  
now available



Councils, communities and water managers can now track the performance of their local water utility thanks to the release of the latest 2020-21 data in our performance monitoring dashboard. This is one part of our efforts to provide transparent, up to date information.

The dashboard is a platform to analyse and compare annual performance of the local water utilities in Regional NSW, as well as the yearly performance of each utility over 8 years.

The indicators are grouped under various business activity categories. There is a glossary tab at the end which lists all the indicators, their corresponding tab and National Water Initiative code used in the National Performance Report. You can also use a filter to select between geographical regions.

You can access the dashboard [here](#). You can also [email the team](#) to provide your feedback and ideas to help improve the product.

## Upskilling new councillors in water management





The Town Water Risk Reduction Program is partnering with the local water sector to develop ways to support councillors as decision-makers for local water utilities.

We have developed a suite of materials on key aspects and risks in water management and the roles and responsibilities for councillors and other decision makers in water management in regional NSW water utilities.

Recently we delivered an induction webinar for new and experienced councillors. The induction [presentation template](#) is also available for councils to use when inducting new councillors to provide an overview of water management in the context of a regional local water utility operating environment.

The [induction handbook](#) is another resource that councils can adapt to suit their own local water utility operations. A [video series](#) featuring mayors and councillors from regional local water utilities, provides invaluable insight from their experience on the importance of water management.

For further information visit our [webpage here](#).

## NRAR enforcing NSW water laws



*Station Creek and its tributaries after unauthorised dams and clearing. Credit: Nearmap.*

The Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) continues to act against those who break the water rules, recently completing 2 prosecutions and an enforceable undertaking.

A Lane Cove company has been ordered to pay fines of more than \$250,000 for offences that damaged environmentally sensitive land near Great Lakes Marine Park. The company was [found guilty](#) of 4 offences including building 2 unauthorised dams and unlawfully clearing vegetation.

In another case, a Riverina landholder has entered an [enforceable undertaking](#) with NRAR after overdrawing his water accounts by 2,280 ML between 2018 and 2020. Under the terms of the agreement the licence-holder faces hundreds of thousands in financial costs, loss of some water entitlements and 3 years of weekly monitoring.

NRAR enforces the rules to ensure fairness for those who comply. [Read more about the NSW water regulators prosecutions.](#)

## Upskilling the community in Nanima



*Kenneth, Brendan (from Nanima) & Kedar (SNG Engineering).*

Two Nanima community men have embraced an opportunity to gain further skills and expand on employment opportunities with the Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program (ACWSP).

During initial works to refurbish the sewerage ponds at Nanima, the ACWSP team and Wellington Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) CEO emphasised the importance of employing and upskilling local Nanima community members. The contractor managing the project spread the word amongst the community, and 2 men who had not previously worked in construction expressed their interest. Named Brendan and Kenneth, they gained their white cards and were employed as an operator and as a labourer.

Brendan and Kenneth have now completed 3 months of work, and have been highly regarded for their sincere efforts, commitment and enthusiasm. As the project is coming to an end, both are eager to continue to work in construction.

Creating opportunities for Aboriginal people to gain experience is always a key part of ACWSP projects. Caring for Water is Caring for Country.

## Commissioning the Homestead Dam fishway, bridge and weir in the Toorale State Conservation Area



*Fish-level perspective of Homestead Fishway, demonstrating a consistent drop in water level that allows fish to easily and quickly ascend upstream or downstream. Credit: Dr Matthew Gordos, DPI Fisheries.*

The Toorale Water Infrastructure Project team is excited to report that the new Homestead Dam fishway, bridge and weir on the Warrego River have been commissioned at Toorale State Conservation Area, near Bourke.

Toorale, a former agricultural property, was purchased with the Australian Government in 2008 to protect its outstanding environmental and cultural values.

The new weir and rock ramp-style fishway have replaced 2 gated regulator pipes. These works – along with the earlier removal of Peebles Dam and nearly completed construction of a vertical slot fishway at Boera Dam – will significantly improve fish habitat connectivity within the lower Warrego River and the Baaka (Darling) River. A range of fish species and ages can now pass over a previously significant barrier to their upstream movement.

For more information, see the [webpage](#) or [email](#) to be added to the mailing list for project updates.

## Non-urban metering



YDOC Local intelligence device. Credit: Pacific Data Systems Australia.

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

You may be eligible for a [temporary exemption](#).

The exemption may apply for works that must connect to telemetry under the non-urban water 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 if a site is within network coverage.

To generate the telemetry coverage report you will need:

- property owner's name
- work approval number
- ESID—a unique 'extraction site' number related to a specific work on your work approval. For this purpose, it is your metered work. Find the ESID 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.

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

The screenshot shows the NSW Water website. At the top, there is a navigation menu with the following items: Allocations and availability, Non-urban metering (selected), Licensing and trade, Environmental water hub, Plans and programs, Water Infrastructure, and Water utilities. Below the navigation is a large image of a person in a hat standing in a field with irrigation systems. The main heading is "What water users need to know". Below this, there is a breadcrumb trail: Home > Non-urban metering > What water users need to know. The main content area features a green box with a checkmark icon and the text "Three easy steps to help you get meter ready". The steps are: 1. Check your licence and approval details on the NSW Water Register to see what is listed and whether there are any existing metering conditions that you need to comply with now. WaterNSW can assist you to amend your approval if you need to update any details including the size of your installed pump or make your work inactive. 2. Use the NSW Government's online metering guidance tool to see if, and how, the rules apply to you. 3. If the rules apply to you, contact a duly qualified person (DQP), such as a certified meter installer (CMI) to discuss your situation. They can advise you about what equipment you need, and order, install and validate it. A list of DQPs can be found on Litigation Australia's website. Just click on 'Certified Meter Installers and Validators' to search for one near you. Below this, there is a section titled "Do the metering rules apply to me?" with instructions to check the NSW Water Register and use the metering guidance tool. To the right, there is a sidebar with the heading "Non-urban metering" and several links: Latest non-urban metering information, What is non-urban metering and why is it important?, What water users need to know (selected), Telemetry coverage tool, What duly qualified persons need to know, What suppliers of metering equipment need to know, and Non-urban metering: document library.

## Do you need to install a new meter or replace an existing one?

If you're installing a new or replacement meter, it must adhere to the [non-urban water metering rules](#).

To comply with the non-urban metering rules when installing a new or replacement meter—that is, a meter that is installed or replaced on or after 1 April 2019—you need to:

- ensure that the meter is pattern-approved
- have the meter installed and validated by a duly qualified person to Australian standards AS4747
- have the meter fitted with a local intelligence device with tamper-evident seals
- connect the meter via telemetry to the NSW Government's data acquisition service as required for surface water pumps 200 mm and greater.

The non-urban water metering rules also apply to new works granted on or after 1 April 2019.

For more information about the non-urban water metering rules visit our [website](#).



## Northern Inland region water users – Non-urban water metering rules

The deadline for water users in the Northern Inland region with medium and large-sized pumps and bores to comply with the non-urban water metering rules was 1 December 2021.

The Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) is currently checking compliance with these rules in Narrabri and surrounds.

The regulator will soon move to other suburbs in the Northern Inland including Armidale, Glen Innes, Gwydir, Inverell, Liverpool Plains, Moree, Narrabri, Tamworth, Tenterfield, Uralla and Walcha.

You should now have compliant metering equipment installed or have at a minimum engaged a certified meter installer before 1 December 2021. If you haven't done so, act quickly to avoid more severe penalties.

Visit the [WaterNSW website](#) for more information on getting meter ready.

## Have your say

Current and upcoming consultations and information events:

### **Towamba Water Sharing Plan 9 May – 19 June 2022**

Public exhibition of the replacement water sharing plan for the Towamba River Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2022 will run from Monday 9 May to Sunday 19 June 2022.

The water sharing plan establishes rules for water management including the limit of the total volume of water that can be extracted from the water sources in the Towamba River water sharing plan area.

Find out more and have your say [here](#)

## **Draft Regional Water Strategy – North Coast 23 May -19 June 2022**

A long-term regional water strategy is being developed to guide how the NSW Government can best address the water-related challenges to support a liveable and prosperous North Coast region. A draft North Coast Regional Water Strategy is on public exhibition from 23 May to 19 June 2022

Attend a webinar Thursday, June 2 - register [here](#)

Attend a public information session: no registration is required

### **Grafton: 8 June**

9:30am – 12:30pm

South Grafton Ex-Servicemens Club

### **Armidale : 9 June**

9:00am – 12:00pm

Armidale Ex-Services Memorial Club

### **Port Macquarie : 15 June**

9:00am – 12:00pm

The Westport Club

### **Coffs Harbour : 16 June**

9:00am – 12:00pm

Coffs Harbour Showground Norm Jordan Pavilion

Find out more about the Draft Regional Water Strategy and have your say please visit [here](#)

[View all](#)

## Latest water news from the department

- [Rising river alert – Snowy River below Jindabyne Dam](#)
- [Draft strategy to secure the North Coast's water future](#)
- [More security for coastal farmers](#)
- [Towamba water sharing plan open for feedback](#)
- [NSW leads discussions for proposed changes to Menindee Lakes operations](#)
- [Have your say on the South Coast Regional Water Strategy](#)
- [Snowy River high-flows to commence in late May](#)

[View all](#)

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## 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:

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[water.relations@dpie.nsw.gov.au](mailto:water.relations@dpie.nsw.gov.au)

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