

Widespread rainfall and flooding across NSW inland catchments



Image credit: Bronwyn Campbell

Rain and storms have saturated much of NSW over the past few weeks, flooding catchments and filling storages. Many catchments now have a flood warning in place, with moderate and major warnings in some areas, and many communities have been affected. This flooding may continue for weeks in some areas, most notably around the Darling River.

The [Bureau of Meteorology](#) is forecasting more wet weather, reporting that December to February is likely to see rainfall in the top 20% of historical records for much of eastern Australia. We encourage you to keep up to date with the [flood warnings](#) in your area.

The heavy rainfall has also resulted in [total rural storage levels](#) increasing to 95% capacity. At the height of the drought in December 2019, rural storages were at just 25% capacity.

All major inland rural dams in NSW are now holding over 90% capacity, including:

- Pindari and Glenlyon (QLD) dams, Border Rivers
- Copeton Dam, Gwydir valley
- Keepit Dam, Namoi valley
- Burrendong Dam, Macquarie valley
- Wyangala Dam, Lachlan valley
- Blowering and Burrinjuck dams, Murrumbidgee valley
- Hume Dam, Murray valley
- Menindee Lakes, lower Darling

High storage levels are reflected in full town, domestic and stock, and increased high security and general security allocations for 2021/22 in most valleys. See [Summary of current water allocations](#) for more information.

Water Infrastructure NSW celebrates one year



November marked the one-year anniversary of the state's first stand-alone water infrastructure agency, Water Infrastructure NSW (WINSW). The organisation is dedicated to planning and delivering around \$4 billion in critical projects and creating thousands of jobs across the state over the next 10 years.

In just one year, Water Infrastructure NSW has secured \$410 million in Australian Government funding which will create thousands of jobs in regional NSW over the next four to eight years. More than \$29 million in contracts have already been awarded.

With the establishment of this agency, NSW is now in the best possible position to meet the increasing demands on our water resources in the face of a more variable climate and a growing regional population.

Water Infrastructure NSW, part of the department's Water group, has for the first time, brought together regional water infrastructure, planning, development and delivery into one agency. This means for the first time that we have a team of expert professionals dedicated to building large water infrastructure.

With dozens of projects in the pipeline, regional communities of NSW can expect to see more and greater investment in their water security in the years to come.

Read [more about WINSW](#) on our website.

Jobs, economic boost for Wilcannia weir roadworks



Local jobs have been created in Wilcannia as the first stage of construction on Union Bend Road starts, paving the way for the town's much anticipated new weir. Ten of the locals employed on the first of this two-stage road upgrade have recently graduated from Wilcannia's TAFE NSW campus.

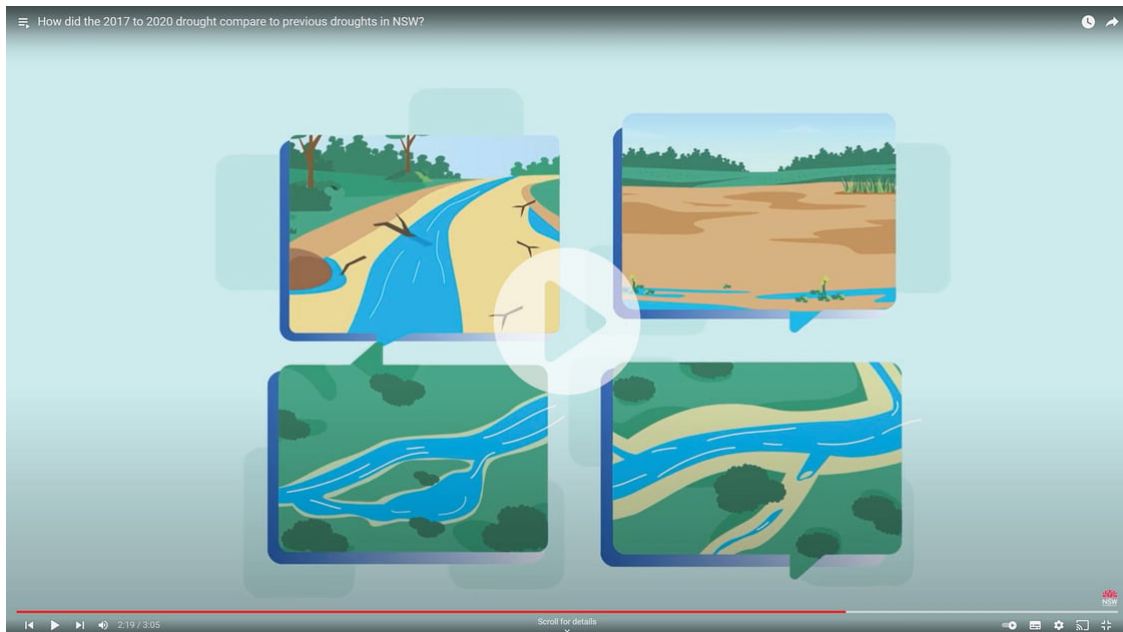
Providing on-the-job practical experience and employment to these graduates, who are teamed with experienced tradespeople, is a great opportunity for the community's newest workers in construction and hospitality.

While construction of the new weir is gearing up to start next year, we're getting shovels in the ground now. With the support of Central Darling Council, works are proceeding to upgrade Union Bend Road from dirt to gravel, so it can support the trucks and machinery required to build Wilcannia's new weir.

When the entire project is complete, the upgraded Union Bend Road will be the main access road to the new weir and its recreational area, offering walking tracks and car parking as well as picnic facilities and opportunities for water sports.

For more information and to read about more opportunities for local businesses, visit the [project webpage](#).

Release of the 2017-2020 valley drought snapshots



The 2017-2020 drought was the worst on historical record since the 1890s for most river valleys across NSW, with northern valleys more impacted than the southern valleys. Not all valleys experienced the same severity of drought because inflows to major storages, a measure of water security, varied across the state.

Individual valley drought snapshots are now available for each regulated river valley and the Barwon-Darling. These snapshots include the valley's inflows to major storages during the drought in comparison to historical inflows and the measures implemented during the drought to manage water supplies, support rural communities and minimise ecological impacts.

Visit [our website](#) to find the valley drought snapshots and watch our [new video](#) to learn more about the 2017-2020 drought.

First state-wide groundwater sampling program complete



The department completed its first state-wide sampling program of groundwater quality earlier this year. Collectively, our researchers visited 588 bores at over 332 locations and collected 957 samples across the state.

Groundwater is an important resource. During the recent drought, many water users applied for new or additional access to groundwater.

The state-wide groundwater sampling program will help us to manage risks to groundwater quality from salt intrusion, over-extraction and mixing between aquifer systems. The data will inform water users about the quality of the groundwater they are using and support future groundwater research.

We worked with WaterNSW to access the bores they manage in February, April and May this year. WaterNSW also provided information to help develop the sampling program for sites, managed databases and helped streamline the laboratory analysis process.

Despite facing challenges during the program, including floods, COVID-19 restrictions and a mouse plague, 95% of planned locations were visited, and we were able to collect 80% of the planned samples.

Groundwater data from the project will be made available. For details please contact WaterNSW via email waterdataservices@waternsw.com.au.

Learn more [about groundwater](#) on our website.

Community backs plan to secure Greater Sydney's water future



The draft Greater Sydney Water Strategy recently wrapped up its six-week public exhibition period, and the community feedback is in.

Water conservation, efficiency programs and water recycling are the bold and innovative measures backed by the community that will secure our water future to 2040 and beyond. The incredible turnout saw:

- More than 17,000 website visits
- Nearly 500 people complete an online survey
- 41 organisations or community members make a public submission

The community said it wants to see Greater Sydney build sustainable water systems that are resilient to extreme events, including droughts and floods. Feedback emphasised the need for healthy waterways and landscapes, and wants smart water management to meet community needs.

Seventy-five per cent of respondents backed greater use of purified recycled water, while 81% backed water conservation proposals.

The community is changing the way it thinks about our city's water future, and so are we. The draft Greater Sydney Water Strategy is a plan to deliver an enduring water supply to Sydney, the Blue Mountains and the Illawarra, now and in the decades to come.

We'll consider all community feedback before the strategy is finalised, which is expected in the first half of 2022.

For more information, visit the [Greater Sydney Water Strategy webpage](#).

\$22 million for more groundwater monitoring in NSW coal basins



Seventy-nine extra bores have been added to our groundwater monitoring network in coal basins following a \$22 million investment by the NSW Government.

Sixty-seven are new purpose-built bores and 12 have been acquired from industry.

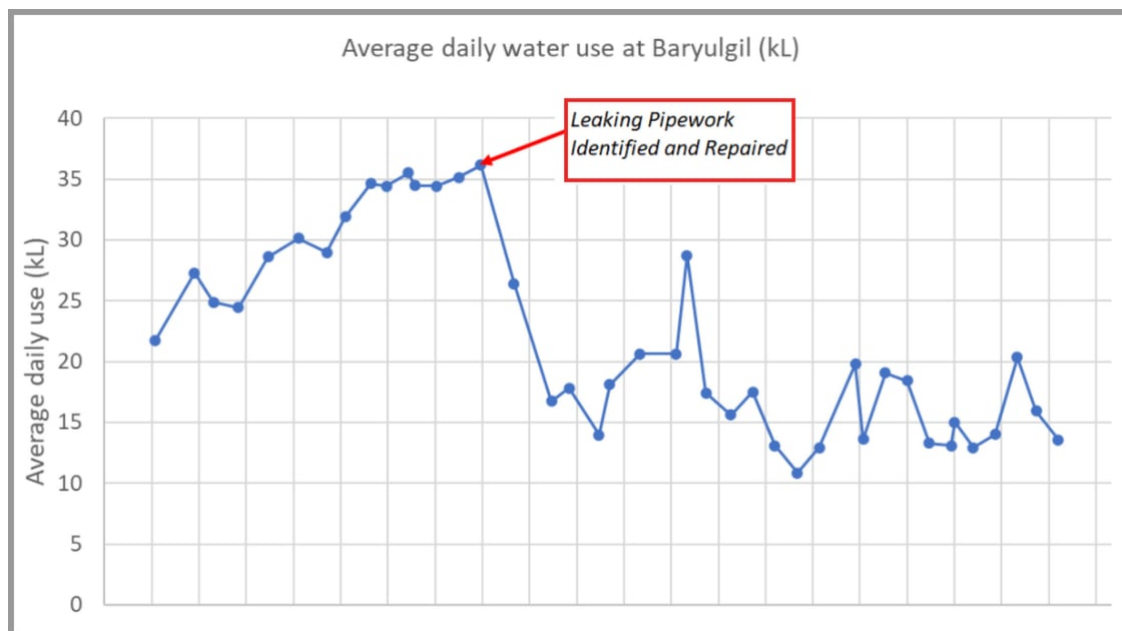
Data on water levels, pressure and salinity in the Southern, Hunter, Newcastle and Western coalfields and the Gunnedah and Gloucester coal basins will be available for anyone to see on the [WaterNSW website in real-time](#). The bores are also equipped with water sampling pumps for monitoring water quality.

Expanding the groundwater monitoring network was a NSW Government commitment in response to community concern over the impact of the coal seam gas industry on groundwater resources in 2015.

This project gives us a baseline that shows the effects of any activity on groundwater sources – which is important as it is used for irrigation, town water supplies, stock and domestic licences, for mining and other industrial purposes. Many communities also relied on groundwater during the recent drought, which makes this monitoring network essential for groundwater users in these areas.

The new bores, with their data available in real-time, will help improve transparency and community trust in water activities, and ensure sustainable future water use.

Proactive maintenance program improving water supply and sewerage services for Aboriginal communities



Month by month water use from February 2020 - September 2021 at Baryulgil

The Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program (ACWSP) is different from many infrastructure initiatives. It has a unique focus on ongoing operations and maintenance (O&M) and not just capital upgrades.

Maintenance is one of the keys to safeguarding against water wastage and ensuring clean, and reliable drinking water to the 63 Aboriginal communities that are part of the program.

The Baryulgil community in north-eastern NSW have reaped the benefits of our proactive maintenance program. The Operations and Maintenance service provider for Baryulgil noticed an increase in water usage, investigated the matrix of subsurface pipes and identified a leak at the water treatment plant. By fixing the leak, the estimated water saving is 9 ML per year, which is equal to 3.6 Olympic sized swimming pools full of water every year.

The program is important to the communities it serves. Without ongoing O&M, infrastructure can degrade prematurely or result in asset failure and water wastage. The Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program places sustainability at the heart of its work.

Caring for Water is Caring for Country.

Learn more about the [Aboriginal Communities Water and Sewerage Program](#) and its aims to improve water supply and sewerage services, in partnership with local Aboriginal communities across NSW.

Non-urban metering



Exemption for small stock and domestic water access licence holders

In September 2021, we [announced changes](#) would be made to temporarily exempt small, low-risk pumps or bores that take water under a domestic and stock water access licence from the non-urban water metering requirements.

This exemption has now been made into law via the [Water Management \(General\) Amendment \(Metering Equipment\) Regulation 2021](#).

This exemption will lapse on 1 December 2024. It will be reviewed as part of the statutory review of the non-urban metering rules, due to commence in early 2024.

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

Updated non-urban metering website

The non-urban metering website has been updated to make it easier for water users to understand the non-urban metering rules and how they may apply.

The updated website also provides information for metering equipment installers, known as Duly Qualified Persons (DQPs) and metering equipment suppliers.

Visit the non-urban water metering website.



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

The non-urban metering rules are rolling out in stages to give water users, suppliers and installers of metering equipment enough time to prepare to become compliant with the rules.

The first of December 2021 was the deadline for water users in the Northern Inland region to have compliant equipment installed. Water users in the Southern Inland region will need to comply by 1 December 2022.

We encourage water users to follow the steps below to find out if the metering rules apply to you, and what you need to do comply.

1. Check your licence and approval details on the [NSW Water Register](#). WaterNSW can assist you to amend your approval.
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 (CMI), to discuss your situation. A list of DQPs can be found on [Irrigation Australia's website](#).

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

Water for the environment



Image credit: Emma Wilson

Snowy environmental flows

The department's Water group and Environment, Energy and Science group have partnered to deliver significant ecological and community safety benefits by coordinating daily environmental flow releases into the Snowy River from Jindabyne Dam.

The 2021-22 daily regime included 9 high flows, most with intervals of weeks between events. These trended up to the maximum peak referred to as a flushing flow. The equivalent peak flow for the largest event on 6 October 2021, was 10,362 ML/d for eight hours.

The repeated high flows provide increased stream power, flushing sediment from the stream bed and keeping it moving. This improved the physical condition of the instream river channel habitat and overall river health, providing habitat for water dependent plants and animals including platypus, macroinvertebrates and fish.

Read more about [Snowy River increased flows](#) on our website.



Image credit: James Dyer

Wetlands flourish from partnership approach

Wetlands in the mid-Murray and Kolety / Edward-Wakool regions are reaping the benefits of a partnership between the department and landholders working together to deliver water for the environment.

The project uses private irrigation pumps and the Murray Irrigation channel system to deliver flows that support the health of lagoons, swamps, creeks and lakes on private land.

Landholders are reporting improved vegetation health with black box and river red gums putting on new growth and increasing abundance of wetland plants like wavy marshwort and tall spike-rush.

Private wetlands provide important habitat for wildlife including threatened species like blue-billed ducks, white-bellied sea eagles, southern bell frogs and broilgas. The network of creeks on private properties also offers ideal nursery habitat for native fish and yabbies.

Since 2001, water for the environment has been delivered to more than 200 private wetlands and creeks in the Murray catchment.

Learn more about the [wetland watering in the Murray Valley](#) on the department's Environment, Energy and Science website.

Regional Water Strategy What we heard reports and consultation summaries



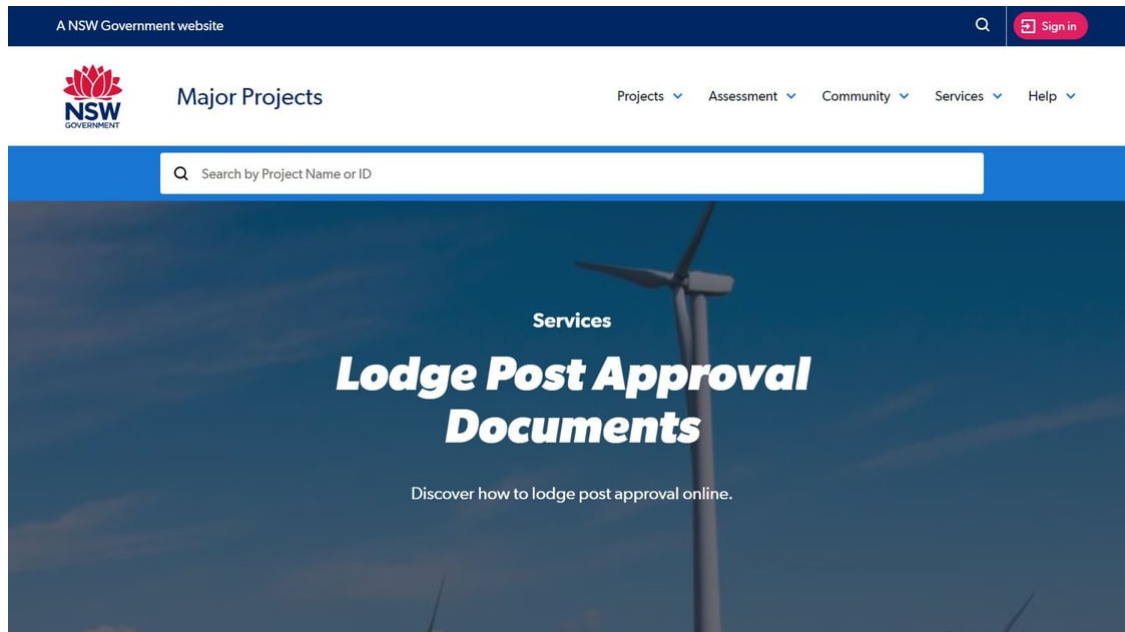
We are pleased to advise that the Regional Water Strategy What we heard reports and consultation summaries have been finalised for the Lachlan, Macquarie-Castlereagh, Gwydir, Border Rivers, Far North Coast, North Coast and South Coast regions. They are available on [our website](#).

These reports are a reflection of what our stakeholders told us during the public exhibition period on the draft strategies. Although COVID-19 impacted the time it took to finalise these reports, our regional water strategy teams have been using this valuable feedback to help refine the long lists of possible options.

We look forward to re-engaging with stakeholders across these regions and are planning to carry out further consultation in early to mid-2022.

Learn more about the [Regional Water Strategy](#) on our website.

Changes to the SSD and SSI post-approvals process



Post approval management plans for state significant development (SSD) and state significant infrastructure (SSI) projects must be submitted to either the department's Water group or the Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) via the [Major Projects portal](#).

This new process aims to improve customer experience by making it easier for proponents to seek feedback and comments from the right agency.

To find out which agency to submit your report to, please see [our website](#).

Post approval management plans are required for most projects as a condition of development application consent. Water resources need to be protected and projects must comply with water licences, and have adequate monitoring in place for the government to track and monitor compliance.

Learn more by reading the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) on our website. Additional enquires can be emailed to water.assessments@dpi.nsw.gov.au or to NRAR at nrar.servicedesk@dpi.nsw.gov.au

Reconnecting River Country Program



Private landholders, First Nations people and the broader community have answered the call to share their local knowledge and experience to help shape the Reconnecting River Country Program.

Stakeholders in the areas of Hume to Yarrawonga (Murray River), Yarrawonga to Wakool Junction (Murray River) and Murrumbidgee River (including Yanco Creek) were invited to participate.

We've now formally started working with these stakeholders to identify and evaluate flows, their benefits and impacts, and combine local insight to inform effective mitigation options. This feedback will help shape the future of the program and is integral to its success.

Launched in August 2021, the Reconnecting River Country Program aims to ensure water for the environment in the southern connected Murray-Darling Basin is delivered where and when it is needed, to improve the health and resilience of Basin rivers, wetlands and floodplains.

Learn more [about the program](#) on our website.

Have your say

Current and upcoming consultations and information events:

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

- [Review backs first use of new rules protecting Barwon-Darling environmental flows](#)
- [NRAR's latest quarterly report highlights breaches in south-western border](#)
- [NRAR enforcement actions increase in July quarter despite statewide lockdown](#)
- [Growing jobs for Indigenous Australians in water metering](#)
- [New floodplain management plans to be developed for southern NSW Murray Darling Basin](#)
- [Jobs, economic boost for Wilcannia Weir roadworks](#)
- [Narrabri irrigator fined over unlawful water take](#)
- [NRAR lays 13 charges over alleged water access breaches in state's south-west](#)
- [Water Infrastructure NSW celebrates one year](#)
- [Maules Creek Coal judgment strengthened by enforceable undertaking](#)
- [Progress report on Northern Basin first flush review released](#)
- [NRAR finds solution to protect natural streams in Moree Plains](#)
- [Rising river alert – Snowy River below Jindabyne Dam](#)
- [Final route announced for Dungowan Dam Pipeline](#)

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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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