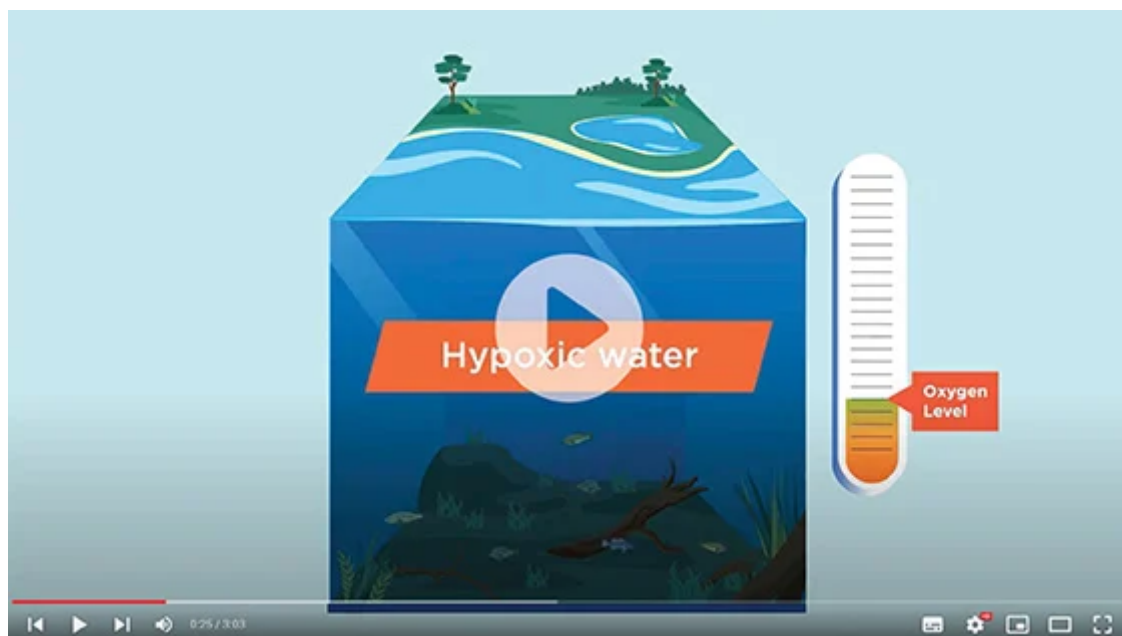


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## Widespread flooding raises risk of water quality issues in the Murray–Darling Basin.



The Murray–Darling Basin continues to experience widespread flooding in some areas, prompting an increased risk of water quality issues like low-oxygen blackwater as temperatures increase.

Governments and water authorities are working together to monitor the unfolding conditions which may see low-oxygen blackwater and blue-green algae emerge which can lead to fish deaths and increased water treatment.

Hypoxic blackwater events are a natural feature of Australian rivers and occur as leaf litter and other carbon-based debris are swept into waterways. As this material is consumed and broken down by bacteria, oxygen from the water is used up, making it difficult for fish and other aquatic animals to survive.

Currently there are isolated reports of crayfish exiting floodwaters to escape poor water quality. With the onset of warmer weather in the coming weeks, water temperatures will start to climb increasing the possibility of hypoxic blackwater, which unfortunately could result in fish deaths.

We will continue to monitor the situation as large amounts of organic material enter rivers from the floodplain.

To report areas in NSW where fish may be struggling or a fish death event has occurred, call the NSW Fisheries Hotline on 1800 043 536.

## Opportunity to obtain new water access licence



*Image credit: Greg Russell*

The NSW Department of Planning and Environment is making new water access licences available in 54 groundwater sources across NSW.

The Controlled Allocation Order (Various Groundwater Sources) 2022 is an opportunity to buy new shares in groundwater sources that have unassigned water. The order makes new licences available through a tender process.

In many groundwater sources with unassigned water, there is little or no water trade. New shares are being offered in these groundwater sources to make it easier for new or expanding enterprises to obtain access to groundwater.

The public are invited to submit their registration of interest between 2 November to 2 December 2022.

Further information can be found on the [department's website](#).

## Have your say on site locations of gauging stations in the northern Murray-Darling Basin and across NSW



The Department of Planning and Environment is seeking stakeholder input on possible site locations for new or upgraded gauging stations in the northern Murray-Darling Basin.

The locations for the first 5 gauges have already been determined. They will be located near Wilcannia, Bourke, Walgett, Quambone and Brewarrina.

These and the remaining 15 gauging stations to be installed are part of the Hydrometric Network and Remote Sensing Program, funded by the Australian Government.

The department has undertaken an initial prioritisation for new gauging stations, which are documented in the [Hydrometric Improvement Plan](#).

Stakeholders are now invited to participate in an [online consultation](#) to determine the locations for the remaining gauging stations by making a submission.

While the primary purpose of this stakeholder consultation is to inform priorities for gauging stations in the Northern Murray-Darling Basin, suggestions for additional monitoring sites, within other parts of NSW, can be made during this consultation.

For NSW, the Northern Murray Darling Basin includes any stream that flows into the Darling River upstream of Menindee Lakes, (see [map on the Murray Darling Basin Authority's website](#)). Note that the Lower Darling and Lachlan are not part of the Northern Basin.

While the main purpose of this program is to improve water resource management, flood warning in NSW is a shared responsibility across all levels of government. The department's [Environment and Heritage Group](#) is leading the implementation of a flood warning improvement program that is supported by Commonwealth funding. The program aims to improve flood warning in priority areas within the 62 local government areas (mostly in coastal areas) affected by the February – March 2022 flood events.

The online consultation will run from 1 November to 31 December 2022. Late submissions are welcome, however may not be able to be considered in the earlier tranches of work.

## Reducing red tape for water licences and approvals

Work is underway to make water licensing and approvals easier, simpler and clearer for customers.

We are working with WaterNSW and the Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) through the Water licensing improvement program, to deliver much-needed improvements to water licensing and approvals for customers.

We will deliver customer improvements including:

- More seamless digital experiences, including tracking of licence applications.
- Easier customer access to the information they need to understand their licence or approval conditions.
- Reduced customer effort and wait times for water licensing and approvals.

Improvements will be implemented across 3 release stages from mid-2023 to mid-2024. We will keep customers informed about the program over the next 2 years.

For more about the Water licensing improvement program, visit the webpage

## Water Ministerial Council meeting improves Basin Plan certainty



*NSW's MinCo 29 attendees with the Minister for Lands and Water. L-R: Cameron Munro (water advisor), Samantha McCallum (DPE), The Hon Kevin Anderson MP, Jeanine Murray (DPE), Gavin Melvin (Chief of staff), Mitchell Isaacs (DPE) and Jim Bentley (DPE).*

The NSW Minister for Lands and Water, the Hon Kevin Anderson MP, attended the 29th Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council meeting in Canberra on 12 October.

The ministers with responsibilities under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan discussed next steps to deliver the Basin Plan, the effects of climate change on water resources, and opportunities to strengthen First Nations' role in water management and ownership.

The meeting was an opportunity to recognise the hard work done to implement the Basin Plan so far, and the positive environmental outcomes already being seen across the Basin.

Ministers noted significant challenges remain to implement the shared Basin Plan commitments by 30 June 2024. The Ministerial Council has agreed to meet again in early 2023 to agree on how to deliver remaining Basin Plan commitments.

Ministers agreed in-principle to implement the recommendations of the [water market reform roadmap report](#).

You can read the official meeting communique [here](#), and Minister Anderson's media release [here](#).

## New Dungowan Dam EIS now on display



The New Dungowan Dam and Pipeline Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) went on public display on 26 October. This is a great opportunity for everyone to provide their feedback on this Critical State Significant Infrastructure project that will increase town water supply, diversify water sources, increase drought resilience, and maintain water for irrigators.

The EIS provides information on the economic, environmental and social impacts of the New Dungowan Dam and Pipeline that will help refine the project design to avoid or minimise any impacts. We take the views of the community seriously which is why we are giving stakeholders 6 weeks to provide their feedback on the project. We want to hear from as many Tamworth and Peel Valley residents as possible to enable us to deliver the best outcomes for everyone.

The EIS will be on public display from 26 October to 7 December. For more information on registering for information sessions visit our [website](#). The EIS is available on the [NSW Planning Portal](#).

## More time to have your say on Lachlan and Macquarie-Castlereagh Water Strategies



Residents, businesses, farmers, First Nations people and stakeholders have an extra 17 days to have their say on the Draft Lachlan and Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategies due to major flooding across the Central West and Western NSW.

Feedback on the two strategies was due to close on 1 November, however due to ongoing flooding along the Lachlan, Castlereagh and Macquarie River catchments the NSW Government is extending the public consultation process to 17 November.

We are also moving our face-to-face consultation sessions to November, weather permitting, to enable as many people as possible to attend.

Every piece of feedback we receive during these public exhibition periods plays an important role in helping us to refine the strategy and drill down to a shortlist of options that will deliver safer, more secure and reliable water over the next 20-40 years.

Please visit our website for the latest updates and to view the [Draft Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy](#) and [Draft Lachlan Regional Water Strategy](#) and lodge a submission.

## Community consultation in Far North Coast NSW

The department is currently consulting with stakeholders on several key water programs in the Far North Coast NSW region. The sessions are to help explain how future water programs will align and interact. We are consulting on the:

- Far North Coast Regional Water Strategy

- Richmond River Area Water Sharing Plan
- Tweed River Area Water Sharing Plan

We are inviting members of the public to have their say and get involved. Live webinars and face-to-face meetings will take place in the local community areas of Kyogle, Murwillumbah, Casino, Wollongbar, and Ballina in mid-November.

Feedback and issues raised during the public exhibition will be used to finalise the plans.

Please visit our website to register for meetings or further information.

## Natural Resources Access Regulator Updates



### Avoiding the NRAR knock on the door

When it comes to water law, small details do matter.

When Natural Resource Access Regulator (NRAR) officers turn up at your property, the works listed on your approval must match what they see on the ground, or you will be in non-compliance with your approval.

If the works installed are smaller in size than those shown on the approval documents, new metering rules have removed the need to amend approvals. Approval holders can instead notify WaterNSW through a [simple online form](#). This rule change also removes the amendment fee.

This simplified process makes it faster and easier than ever to notify if you have a smaller sized work on your property, and to make sure your approval information is accurate. For works larger than those shown on the approval documents, an [amendment](#) is still required.

[Find out more about how NRAR responds to non-compliance](#)



## Do you know how the water rules apply to you?

Water management can seem complex. Access licences, irrigation, meters, bores and waterfront works all come with rules and responsibilities.

As the independent water regulator, the [Natural Resources Access Regulator](#) (NRAR) ensures water is used lawfully so that all water users, communities and the environment get their fair share.

To help water users understand their responsibilities, NRAR officers attend field days across the state, supplying hundreds of water users with friendly advice and the tools they need to comply.

NRAR staff recently attended [Australian National Field Days](#) near Orange, and those in Northern NSW can catch NRAR at [Primex Field Days](#) in Casino from Thursday 10 to Saturday 12 November.

When it comes to water law, we know the rules. As responsible water users, it's important you do too.

[Stay up to date on where you can find NRAR at an event near you](#)

## New Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder appointed





Dr Simon Banks has started his role as the new Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH), following the recent retirement of Hilton Taylor. The CEWH manages water for the environment on behalf of the Australian Government to support the rivers and wetlands of the Murray-Darling Basin.

Dr Banks brings a wealth of experience to the role, previously holding a senior role at the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office (CEWO) from 2009 to 2014, and a range of other senior government roles. Dr Banks said he is pleased to be returning to the CEWO and progressing their important work.

“I’m starting in the job at a time where the Murray-Darling Basin is experiencing very wet conditions and I’d like to express my concern for those communities experiencing or at risk of flooding.

“Once flooding starts to recede, we will respond to conditions and use water for the environment to continue to build the resilience of wetlands and floodplains, and support waterbirds and native fish in rebuilding populations.”

You can learn more about the CEWH’s plans for water management this year [here](#).



Please note: Current weather conditions may impact scheduled consultations. Please remain up to date on any changes via our [stakeholder engagement page](#).

**Lachlan Regional Water Strategy**  
**Public exhibition 5 October – 18 November**

To find out more and have your say, stakeholders can:

- Read more about the strategy development through our [project page](#)
- Attend a [public information session](#)
  - Hillston – Monday 7 November, 11:00am – 1:00pm
  - Cowra – Wednesday 9 November, 2:00pm – 5:00pm
  - Parkes – Thursday 10 November, 2:00pm – 5:00pm

### **Macquarie-Castlereagh Regional Water Strategy Public exhibition 5 October – 18 November**

To find out more and have your say, stakeholders can:

- Read more about the strategy development through our [project page](#)
- Attend a public [information session](#)
  - Orange – Wednesday 2 November, 2:00pm – 5:00pm
  - Dubbo – Wednesday 9 November, 2:00pm – 5:00pm
  - Parkes – Thursday 10 November, 2:00pm - 5:00pm

### **Reform of the Water Industry Competition Act 26 September – 30 November**

In response to requests from stakeholders, the department has extended the submission period for this consultation. Submissions are now being accepted up to 11:59 pm on Wednesday, 30 November 2022. To find out more and to have your say, please visit our [project page](#)

### **Draft replacement Richmond River Area Unregulated, Regulated and Alluvial Water Sources Water Sharing Plan Public Exhibition 20 October – 18 December**

The Richmond River community has been devastated by the recent catastrophic floods. However, there is a legal requirement to replace the water sharing plan. In recognition of current community priorities, we are limiting changes proposed in the draft water sharing plan to state-wide policy updates and minor plan improvements.

The public exhibition period has also been extended to 60 days to provide additional opportunity for those who wish to make a submission.

To find out more and have your say, stakeholders can:

- Read more about the strategy development through our [project page](#)
- Register to attend a public [information webinar](#)
  - Wednesday 9 November 5:00pm – 6:00pm
- Register to attend a public [information session](#)
  - [Kyogle](#) – Monday 14 November, 12:00pm - 4:00pm
  - [Casino](#) – Wednesday 16 November 10:00am – 2:00pm
  - [Wollongbar](#) – Thursday 17 November, 10:00am – 2:00pm
  - [Ballina](#) – Friday 18 November, 10:00am – 1:00pm

## **Stay up to date**

The Water Engagement Roundup is a monthly webinar that provides updates on current consultation and engagement about important water policies and programs.

Register for the next webinar.

## Latest water news from the department

- [Widespread flooding raises risk of water quality issues in the Murray-Darling Basin](#)
- [Supplementary water for Murray irrigators](#)
- [New Dungowan Dam EIS on display](#)
- [New water treatment plans for Central Darling Shire](#)
- [Opportunity to obtain a new groundwater access license](#)
- [More Certainty for NSW communities](#)

[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:

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

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