

An independent review into floodplain harvesting

The NSW Floodplain Harvesting Policy seeks to bring the harvesting of water from floodplains into the water licensing framework to better manage water resources in the state. The policy is being rolled out in key areas of the northern Murray–Darling Basin including the NSW Border Rivers, Gwydir, Namoi, Macquarie, and Barwon–Darling valleys.

To ensure community and stakeholder confidence in the way floodplain harvesting is being managed, the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment together with the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) commissioned an independent peer review of the implementation of the Floodplain Harvesting Policy in northern NSW.

The key objective of the review was to provide transparency around the technical information and to provide stakeholders with confidence that the technical rigour and supporting processes are suitable to support policy implementation.

The independent review made 16 key recommendations and 48 other recommendations that follow five key themes:

1. improving documentation and transparency of modelling to demonstrate that the models make use of the best available information and are fit for purpose
2. expanding consultation to inform stakeholders and the community about the information used in the models and how models are used to determine licence volumes
3. undertaking further assessment and communication on the anticipated downstream benefits of the licensing framework
4. developing an adaptive management framework that allows for improvements over time
5. implementing an effective and efficient monitoring framework.

One issue raised in the review that has also come up in stakeholder consultations is concern over the difficulty of accurately measuring water harvested from floodplains. We are working with stakeholders and industry to overcome these issues as part of the policy implementation process.

The independent review report confirms that the policy implementation is on the right track, but highlights that improvements can be made. The department has accepted the review recommendations in full and has responded to them in its *Floodplain Harvesting Action Plan*, which you can find on our website at: industry.nsw.gov.au/floodplain-harvesting

An action plan for floodplain harvesting

The NSW Government's *Floodplain Harvesting Action Plan* details how we will implement the recommendations of the independent review and reinforces key priorities in the delivery and implementation of the NSW Floodplain Harvesting Policy. Those key priorities are to:

- provide clarity about how floodplain harvesting will be managed
- protect the environment and downstream water users
- provide certainty for irrigators legally taking water from a floodplain
- provide a licensing framework that supports compliance
- ensure stakeholders and industry have a say in water sharing rules for floodplain harvesting
- rebuild trust in water management in NSW.

Through the action plan, the NSW Government has committed to taking action on the recommendations outlined in the independent review. The action plan also confirms the importance of working with stakeholders and industry throughout the process.

The government is committed to:

- using the best available facts, data and scientific analysis to underpin the licensing framework
- setting clear rules for floodplain harvesting and consulting with stakeholders
- ensuring rules are followed
- improving floodplain harvesting management over time.

More information

For more information, contact: floodplain.harvesting@dpi.nsw.gov.au or visit our website at industry.nsw.gov.au/floodplain-harvesting

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