

Water User Reference Group (WURG) Communique

Meeting 3 – Wednesday 3 June 2020

All members were in attendance, except for an apology from Greg Hill, Local Government representative for the Lower-Darling and Uncle Badger Bates from Barkandji Native Title Group Aboriginal Corporation.

Purpose of meeting

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss how communication of, during and after, first flush events can be improved in future. The meeting also covered discussion about the appropriate tools and/or regulatory frameworks that could be used to manage future first flush events.

Key items of discussion

The group discussed how, and what improvements can be made to the communication of, during and after first flush events. Key suggestions put forward to the Panel included:

- better coverage of communication networks to notify affected water users
- clearer and more timely communication of what and why restrictions were being imposed and lifted
- the need to tailor communication to suit different audiences (communities and water users)
- development of a NSW Government digital application as a means of communication for future first flush events
- the need for easily accessible information and messaging of first flush events on Government websites.

There was extensive discussion on the tools and regulatory frameworks suitable for the management of future first flush events. There was broad support for suggested key steps in the ideal framework (see Figure 1 below). Key suggestions put forward to the Panel included:

- using statutory instruments as a tool to stipulate overarching principles to manage future first flush events
- codifying the rules to manage future first flush events in water sharing plans
- where possible, limit the use of s324 orders in managing these events to extreme events
- the need for a regulatory framework that manages first flush events at a Basin-scale with the objective to achieve and maintain Basin connectivity
- consideration of Native Title and cultural rights in the development of a first flush framework
- the need for a regulatory framework that can deal with unexpected circumstances.

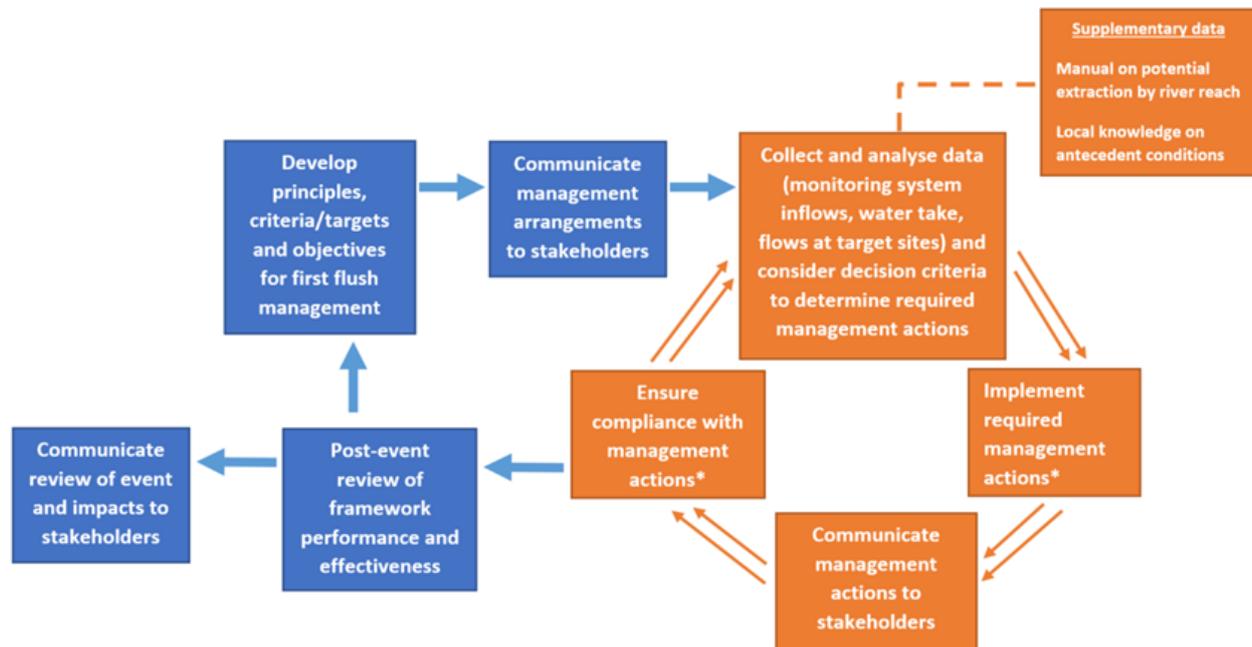


Figure 1. Flowchart of key steps in the ideal framework.

Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 18 June 2020 and will discuss community feedback on how the first flush event was managed and key themes for the Panel’s draft report.

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