

Outcomes from the public exhibition of the plan

The NSW Government has agreed to develop water resource plans as part of the implementation of the Murray–Darling Basin Plan 2012.

Water resource plans demonstrate how the Basin states of NSW, the ACT, Queensland and Victoria coordinate their water management with the federal government's Basin Plan, including how the sustainable diversion limits set in the Basin Plan will be met.

As part of the planning process, the draft NSW Border Rivers Surface Water Resource Plan, and proposed amendments to the existing water sharing plans, were publically exhibited from 5 December 2018 to 1 February 2019

One public meeting was held in Goondiwindi on the 11 December 2018 with 14 attendees.

Stakeholders provided valuable feedback that helped with the development of the final versions of the water resource plan, and water sharing plans. This factsheet outlines the main changes since public exhibition.

Submissions

We received a total of 20 submissions on the draft NSW Border Rivers Resource Plan and associated documents, with 40 separate issues for consideration.

How submissions were considered

The NSW Government examined the nature of the issues raised, or suggestions made in the submission, and considered them in relation to the:

- scope of water resource planning
- principles outlined in the Basin Plan and their consistency with the plan's requirements
- principles set by the NSW Government for water resource planning and any statutory, technical or administrative constraints.

In particular, we considered the following questions for each issue or suggestion:

- Is it likely to have an impact on water availability or how water is distributed to access licences of different categories or within a category, and if so, how?
- Is it likely to result in a net reduction in planned environmental water?
- Can current statutory mechanisms enable the change, or is legislative change required?
- Is it consistent with current policy settings, and if not, is development of robust alternative policies feasible within the timeframe to develop the water resource plan?
- Are there additional costs for the NSW Government?
- Is it cost neutral for NSW water licence holders and if not, what is the cost implication?
- Does it relate to water charges, costs, operational activities or licensing matters outside of the scope of the water resource plan?
- Are there existing programs/processes or other departments addressing the issue?
- Is its full investigation feasible within the timeframe of developing the water resource plan?
- Does it set a precedent for other water resource plans?

Changes since public consultation

- the water resource plan, water sharing plan and supporting documents have been aligned to ensure consistency between the documents, in particular licensed entitlements
- a fact sheet will be prepared to accompany the remade regulated water sharing plan and amended unregulated water sharing plan in mid 2020 that provides information on the principles applied to ensuring compliance with the long-term annual average extraction limits and sustainable diversion limits

General changes to the water sharing plans

- the water sharing plan objectives were revised to address comments raised in submissions and to better align with strategies and performance indicators. This included removal of the references to the Long Term Water Plans in the notes to the plan objectives
- specific licence provisions for floodplain harvesting have been removed and will be added back in after further consultation and when floodplain harvesting licences are ready to be issued
- provisions relating to the implementation of the NSW Floodplain Harvesting Policy have been removed and will only be included once floodplain harvesting licences are ready to be issued.
- provisions relating to sustainable diversion limit compliance have been amended to clarify that the compliance process will follow the requirements of the Basin Plan
- amendment clause relating to the access licence dealing rules has been added to provide for the conversion of the regulated river (high security) access licences to unregulated access licences where the regulated system is connected to and downstream of the unregulated system. Further stakeholder engagement will be undertaken to review options prior to development of the dealing rules if they are required.

Changes to NSW Border Rivers Regulated River Source Water Sharing Plan

- Proposed provisions relating to the Pindari Stimulus flow have been amended to extend the protection of the stimulus from the confluence of the Severn River and Frazers Creek downstream to confluence of Macintyre River and Dumaresq River
- The water sharing plan has been amended to allow the Environmental Water Manager to release Environmental Water from the Pindari stimulus during the period of 1st August to 1st December
- The water sharing plan has been amended to include provisions which allow the minister to consult with an EWAG to allow for a coordinated approach to the management of Environmental Water in the NSW Border rivers WRPA.
- Changes made to the provisions that effect the SDL to bring rules more into line with the requirements of the Basin Plan
- New provisions have been Included in the water sharing plan to cater for the application of mandatory metering equipment conditions through the *Water Management (General) Regulation 2018*
- The water sharing plan has been amended to remove all reference to the Northwest Interim Flow Plan. Flow targets have been retained.
- the third definition/component of PEW 'water remaining after water has been taken under basic landholder rights and access licences, in accordance with the rules in Parts 7 and 9'

has been removed to reduce potential ambiguity.

- the economic objectives for the plan have been updated to include a targeted objective which states 'maintain and where possible to improve access to water up to the long-term average sustainable diversion limit for agriculture, surface water-dependant businesses and landholders'
- an amendment provision has been included to facilitate total extractions reaching the long-term average annual extractions, or long-term average sustainable diversion limit, when the total extractions are significantly less than those over the long term.
- Minor wording changes to improve clarity and reduce ambiguity

Changes to NSW Border Rivers Unregulated Water Source Water Sharing Plan

- The water sharing plan has been amended for each Management Zone, and flow classes were removed and replaced with a cease to pump rule which requires visible flow before water can be taken. New provisions have been established in the water sharing plan to manage access to in river and off river pools
- Minor wording changes to improve clarity and reduce ambiguity

Outcomes of preliminary MDBA review

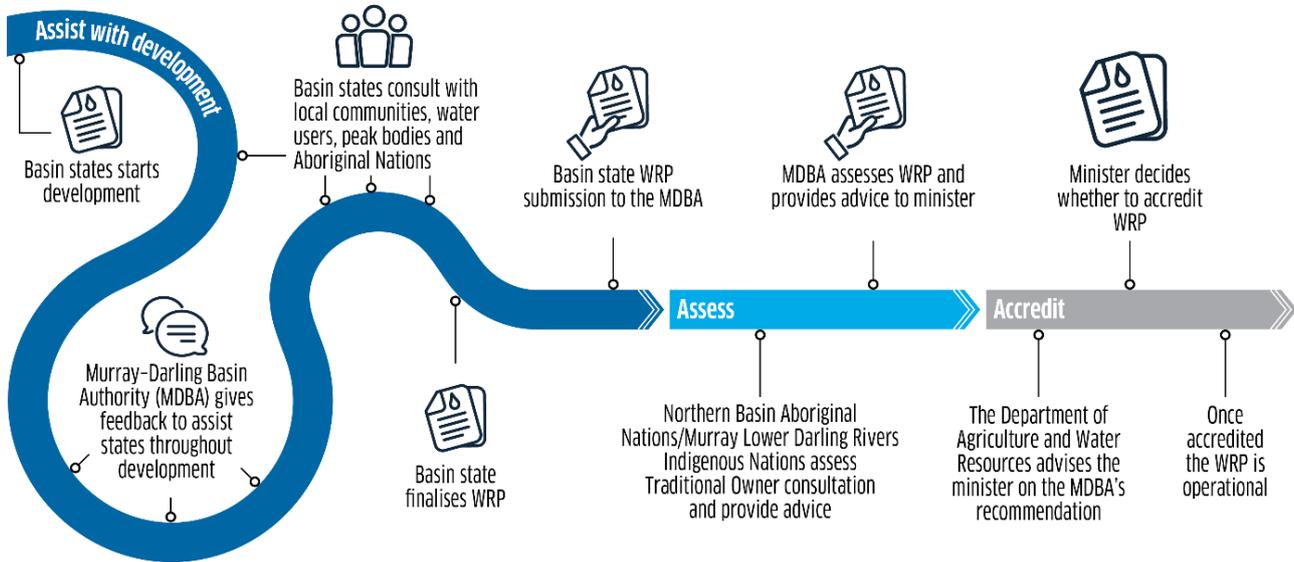
The Murray–Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) assesses the draft water resource plans as part of the plan development. The assessment informs the federal minister's decision on whether to accredit the water resource plan.

While the official assessment won't happen until we formally submit the water resource plan to the MDBA, the MDBA has undertaken a preliminary review of the public exhibition version of the plan. This early feedback has been valuable for informing additional changes to the documents, primarily the water resource plan, water quality management plan and risk assessment. Changes generally relate to clarifying and justifying matters to ensure Basin Plan requirements are met.

Following the official assessment by the MDBA, the federal minister responsible for water will review the plan and determine whether it meets the Basin Plan objectives and can be accredited.

Once accredited, the final NSW Border Rivers Water Resource Plan is uploaded to the MDBA's website. The draft plans can be found on the MDBA's website

Figure 1. Water resource plan accreditation process



More information

The NSW Border Rivers Water Resource Plan and fact sheets are available from the department's 'website at (www.water.nsw.gov.au)

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