

## 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 Lachlan Surface Water Resource Plan, and proposed amendments to the existing water sharing plans, were publically exhibited from 29 November 2019 to 1 February 2019.

We held public meetings in Canowindra on the 5 December 2018 with nine attendees, in Hillston on the 6 December 2018 with 14 attendees and Forbes on the 7 December 2018 with 20 attendees.

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

## Submissions

We received a total of 14 submissions on the draft Lachlan Water Resource Plan and associated documents, with 79 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 water sharing plans 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
- 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 in the regulated water sharing plans

- 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 Lachlan Regulated River Water Source Water Sharing Plan

- Temporary and permanent trades downstream have been permitted up to 149 GL across the mid-Lachlan trade barrier at Lake Cargelligo Weir. The volume is the maximum of water that can remain within the channel without resulting in overbank loss.
- Frequency of account reset will only occur when storages are full or filling from flows already in this the tributaries. Airspace operations at Wyangala Dam will not trigger an account reset, and there will be a minimum of 6 months between account resets.
- Debit of evaporation losses against accounts will be based on the volume of allocation held in an account at a defined point in time. This will provide more equity in apportioning losses and is expected to reduce the volume of inactive water held in storage.
- Two creek offtakes (Island and Wallamundry) have infrastructures that constrain the

maximum flow that can be diverted during high and low flows. Instead of restricting trade and impacting the market, a note has been added to the WSP that identifies these known infrastructure constraints as a way to manage any impacts that future increases in extractions in this system may have.

- Domestic and Stock (Stock) access licences have been prohibited in order to manage the potential for growth in extractions in the Lachlan Regulated River Water Source. This brings the Lachlan Regulated WSP in line with other inland Regulated WSPs.

### Changes to Belubula Regulated Rivers Water Source Water Sharing Plan

- The continuous end of system flow target has been revised to provide a seasonally appropriate flow by including a 'wet' and 'dry' trigger for daily releases.
- A 'first flush' rule has been added to protect one flow event in autumn/winter each year. This will ensure that a flow of a magnitude similar to a 'small fresh' is protected from take from uncontrolled flows.
- Access to uncontrolled flows will now have a trigger that includes the storage level in Carcoar Dam.
- Accounting rules for uncontrolled flows have changed to ensure that take from uncontrolled flows is debited the allocation accounts.
- The account limit for general security accounts has been reduced from 130% to 110%. This is expected to address the issue of underutilisation in the Belubula as it allows for reallocation of unused water. This could increase AWDs for general security licences.

### Changes to Lachlan Unregulated River Water Sources Water Sharing Plan

- Minor wording changes to improve clarity and reduce ambiguity

## Outcomes of preliminary MDBA review

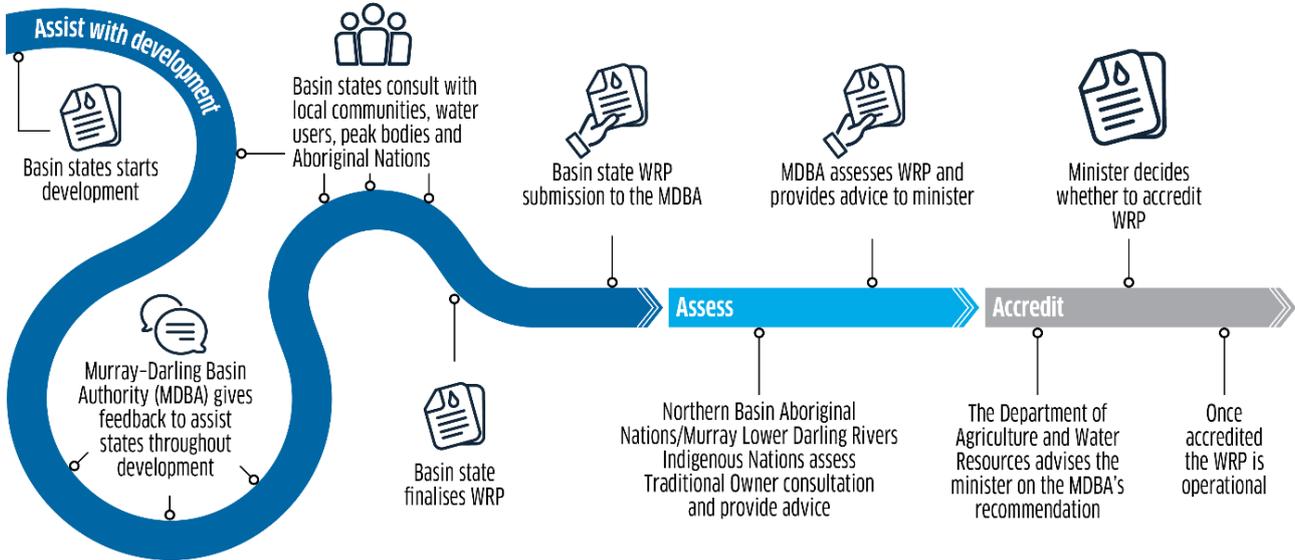
The Murray–Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) assesses the draft water resource plans as part of the plan development. The assessment informs the federal minister's decision on whether to accredit the water resource plan.

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 Lachlan 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 Lachlan Water Resource Plan and fact sheets are available from the department's website at [www.industry.nsw.gov.au](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au)

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