

# Reconnecting River Country Program: Collaborating with stakeholders



## Program engagement, 2023

There are a range of opportunities for stakeholders to have a say and learn more about the Reconnecting River Country Program.

We have closely considered the lessons learned from previous engagements about relaxing flow constraints across southern NSW and have designed a program that is working collaboratively with the community to deliver environmental outcomes and to meet local needs.

The program's collaboration model seeks to engage and receive feedback from private and public landholders, First Nations communities and other stakeholders on key aspects of the program including (but not limited to):

- the benefits and potential impacts of different flow options being considered
- the accuracy of flow option extent maps through on-ground validation
- potential works and measures

- how we can improve and strengthen our stakeholder engagement and communication with communities
- landholder and community sentiment about the program.

This layered approach ensures a wide range of perspectives are incorporated into ongoing program development.

## Collaboration to date

The program has engaged extensively with landholders, First Nations communities, public land managers and regional community groups since its launch in August 2021.

To date, there have been almost 6000 interactions through group meetings, webinars, enquiries, phone calls, face-to-face visits and other community activities.



Formal engagement has largely been carried out via targeted landholder case studies, regional focus groups, discussions with peak bodies, community groups and through First Nations on-Country assessments.

This has helped us identify stakeholder issues and develop a proposed suite of measures to mitigate the potential impact of flow options before making any changes to existing rules, policies or infrastructure.

## Upcoming collaboration with stakeholders

Drawing on the insights of previous stakeholder interactions, we are now expanding our engagement to a wider base of private landholders, First Nations communities and other stakeholders.

This next phase of engagement will involve discussions about the benefits and impacts of the flow options, and the potential mitigation measures currently being considered.

## Private landholder engagement

Landholders and case study participants provide information to inform the program's development.

In this next phase of engagement we will seek to understand the property-scale benefits and impacts of each flow option, the accuracy of inundation mapping and the suitability of mitigation options.

As part of this engagement, we will introduce a range of works and measures from the [Impact Management Toolbox](#) and will work with landholders to identify potential works and measures that are suitable under each flow option. Feedback during this phase may identify additional mitigation options.

Landholders within the program area are being asked to register using the [landholder registration form](#) and take part in the engagement process.



## First Nations communities

As part of development of the program, we are committed to working with First Nations people to closely and meaningfully consider the water-dependent cultural values and uses that are important to communities.

We will continue to consult with First Nations people across the project areas using a Nation-by-Nation approach.

This engagement will take place via face-to-face talks, on-Country workshops and assessments and the formation of First Nations reference groups in the Murrumbidgee River and Murray River program areas.

We will also continue to work with key First Nations stakeholders, such as the Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, Local Aboriginal Lands Councils and Native Title groups to ensure they are consulted and included.

More information on how we are [engaging with First Nations communities](#).

## Program reference groups

As part of expanding the involvement of private landholders and First Nations communities in the program we are also establishing several program reference groups.

The purpose of these reference groups is to support transparent, equitable, fair, and consistent engagement with a broader range of stakeholders across the program area.

The role of private landholder reference group members is to engage with the program on behalf of a declared/disclosed group of stakeholders, while the role of the First Nations Reference group members is to engage with the program on behalf of Country and First Nations communities. All reference groups will advise on key aspects of the program including mitigation works and measures, flow options and the proposed Landholder Negotiation Scheme.

More information on the [program's reference groups](#).

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## Program Advisory Committee

We are also establishing an Advisory Committee comprising members from a range of disciplines and areas of expertise including public land management, science, community, private landholders and First Nations.

The role of the committee will be to consider feedback received from the reference groups and to provide advice to the program for consideration.

## Public authorities

Relevant Australian and NSW Government agencies are also being engaged to review, advise and inform the approach and process of the program.

The program is funded by the Australian Government and is part of the NSW Government's commitment to the [Murray-Darling Basin Plan](#).

It is being led by the Department of Planning and Environment's Water Infrastructure NSW in partnership with the department's Environment and Heritage Group and the Department of Regional NSW's Local Land Services, who will work with landholders and communities across the southern basin to implement the program.

To deliver the program we are also working with:

- WaterNSW
- NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
- NSW Department of Primary Industries–Fisheries
- Murray–Darling Basin Authority
- Victorian Government.

## Acknowledgement

The Department of Planning and Environment acknowledges we stand on Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land, and we show our respect for Elders past, present and emerging through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically.

## Find out more

To find out more about the program and upcoming consultation opportunities:

- visit [dpie.nsw.gov.au/reconnecting-river-country-program](https://dpie.nsw.gov.au/reconnecting-river-country-program)
- phone **1300 081 047**
- email [admin.rrcp@dpie.nsw.gov.au](mailto:admin.rrcp@dpie.nsw.gov.au)
- subscribe for updates [water.nsw.gov.au/RRCPUpdates](https://water.nsw.gov.au/RRCPUpdates)
- get in touch with your local engagement officer.