



Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water



Customer Advisory Group (CAG) afternoon sessions Lachlan

Water Group

Peter Hansen
Engagement, Water Group

March-April 2026



Acknowledgement of Country



The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acknowledges that it stands on Aboriginal land.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and water, and we show our respect for Elders past, present and emerging.

We do this 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.

Artist and designer Nikita Ridgeway from Aboriginal design agency – Boss Lady Creative Designs, created the People and Community symbol.



Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water



Acknowledgement of local community

I would also like to acknowledge our farmers, graziers, councils and local communities and the support they provide to their communities and the country.

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

Lachlan CAG Presentation

Peter Hyde
Director Inland Planning

24 March 2026



Minimum Inflows

Minimum Inflows project



Incorporating risk of climate change and variability into water allocations

The Minimum inflows project will:

- review the water that will flow into dams during drought
- adjust the storage reserve to ensure high priority requirements can be met under future climate scenarios

Key outcomes and objectives



Improved capacity to manage water availability under a more variable climate → *more certainty for water users and environment*

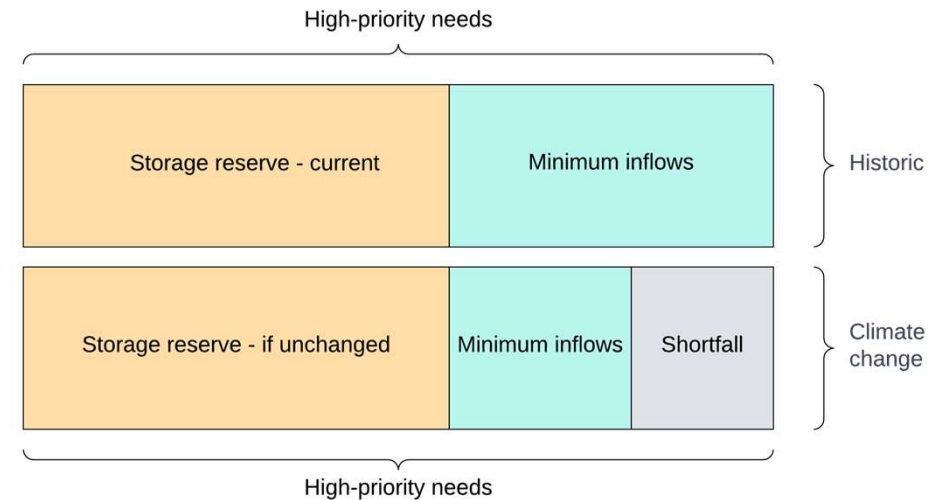


Establishing an agreed likelihood of the Extreme Events Policy being triggered/WSP suspensions → *agreed level of risk for water users and environment*

Why minimum inflows matter

Past droughts (Millennium, Tinderbox) saw record low inflows into dams. This triggered:

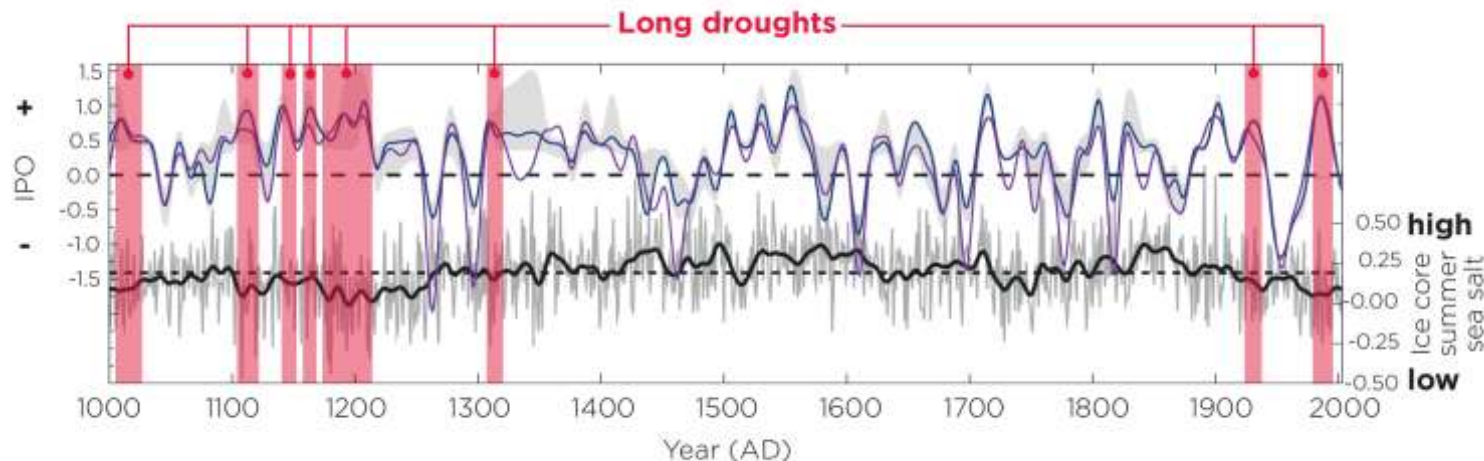
- Extreme Events Policy and Emergency drought measures
- Suspension of water sharing plans
- Reduced allocations for high-priority licences
- Issues delivering water to towns
- Suspension of environmental water to meet critical human needs



Highlighted the need for a review of the current method, particularly with climate change risk

Current approach and new data

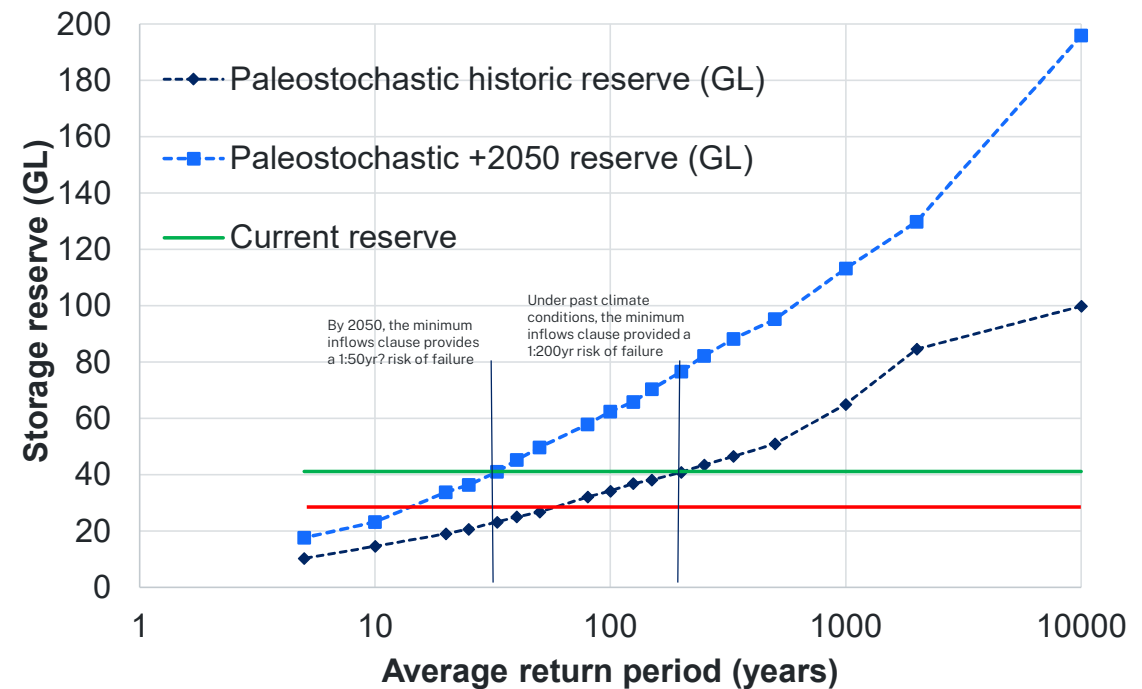
- Use of observed historical data: 1890s to (mostly) 2004 (best available information at the time)
- Excludes the Millenium and Tinderbox droughts and does not consider climate change
- We now have 10,000 years of paleo-stochastic data to better understand long term climate variability and NARClIM 2.0 to help us understand likely climate change impacts
- Picking a single ‘worst drought on record’ like we currently do is not feasible for a 10,000 yr dataset
- New data allows for more nuance in estimating risk and designing WSPs to manage those risks.



New method

- We will need to choose an amount of water to store in the dam to meet a particular level of reliability
- The reliability of the current reserve is approx. 1 in 200 years under historic conditions –or, 1 in 50 years under the 2050 climate (Example only)
- The average stage 4 of the Extreme Events Policy changes from 1 in 75 years to 1 in 20 years.

Comparison of Historic and 2050 projection storage reserve requirements



Method outputs and considerations for decision making



- Impacts and benefits to different licence entitlements/water users
 - Length and severity of expected shortfalls
 - Economic impacts
 - Environmental impacts
 - High priority needs (e.g., BLR, town water supply, high security, environmental water)
-

OCSE Expert Panel review



- OCSE review was completed in July 2025
- Endorsement of the method with 13 recommendations across 3 categories
- Key feedback was:
 - Represents a strong conceptual framework to estimate the impact of climate change and variability on estimates of minimum inflows.
 - Use of paleo-stochastic data adjusted with climate data is transparent and an improvement compared to using historical data
- The departments response to the review and how we have and will continue to implement the recommendations was recently released.

Where we are up to and next steps



- The method and response to the OCSE review are available on the website:
<https://www.water.dcceew.nsw.gov.au/our-work/projects-and-programs/minimum-inflows-project>
- Webinars will be held on 11 March and 30 March for Minimum Inflows and Northern Basin Connectivity
- Modelling and impact analysis is being finalised for northern valleys, and has just begun on southern basin valleys.
- Consultation on the results of analysis and how to apply the method will occur for the northern basin valleys starting in late April, prioritising Border Rivers, Gwydir and Namoi.

Replacement of the Lachlan Regulated WSP 2016

Overview of plan replacement



- 6 inland regulated WSPs are due to expire in June 2026, with the NRC recommending the plans be replaced*
- The Minister for Water has given in-principle support to extend these plans until June 2028 to enable them to be remade
- Plans have been batched (south/north) to smooth resourcing peaks and align with key reform project delivery (where possible).

Inland regulated WSP batches

Batch 1 – deliver by end December 2027

- Murray and Lower Darling
- Murrumbidgee
- Lachlan

Batch 2 – deliver by 1 July 2028

- Gwydir
- Upper and Lower Namoi
- Macquarie-Cudgegong



Overview of plan replacement

Timing – Inland Regulated WSP replacement – due to expire 2026

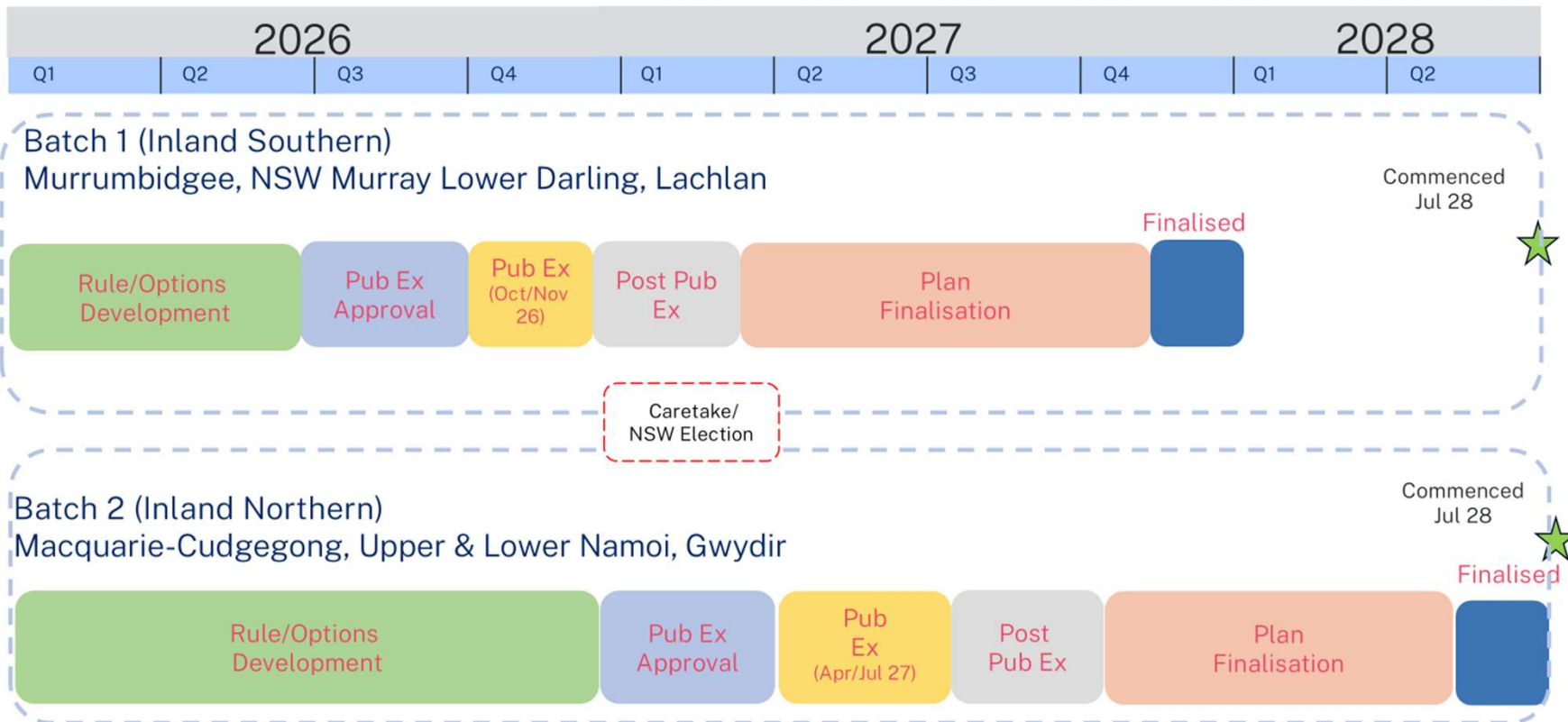


Table 1. Issues to be addressed within the WSP



(In scope) Issue / theme	Issue description
Review environmental water rules	Some planned environmental water rules are not achieving desired environmental outcomes. For example, translucent release recession rates are not reflecting natural processes.
Investigate accounting arrangements to achieve better environmental objectives.	Considering opportunities to enable piggybacking and return flow arrangements.
Review and provide clarity on airspace operation provisions	Giving greater clarity to the operator and ensuring the best environmental and productive outcomes.
Reviewing and clarifying account rules	This may include investigation of different account limit scenarios.
Aboriginal cultural considerations	Consultation with native title holders and claimants on whether the plan provisions align with native title rights
Template drafting and administrative changes	Drafting changes to be consistent with the current regulated plan template, correct errors or update information.

Table 2. Issues to be addressed outside of the WSP or that need a statewide approach



(Out of scope) Issue / theme	Issue description
Minimum Inflows Program	Minimum Inflows program is to set a storage reserve that will better meet in-valley high priority needs in times – changes to plans will depend on timing.
Climate Change in WSPs	Draft WSP climate change data guidance is currently being finalised – Lachlan regulated plan to be pilot to inform how we can use data. The work remains exploratory and is unlikely to lead to immediate changes to the plan.
Introducing supplementary water access licenses	This option would directly reduce the volume of PEW, this doesn't meet Basin Plan requirement
Include additional mandatory conditions in plans to decommission works	It is no longer standard practice for plans to require decommissioning-related mandatory conditions to be applied to surface water work approvals.
Operational issues that sit outside the plan	It is not appropriate to include detailed operational information in the plan. Water Group will continue to work with WaterNSW to bring greater clarity and transparency on system operations, where appropriate.

Consultation

- Undertaking targeted consultation at key stages
- Targeted consultation was undertaken in Nov/Dec 2025 to identify issues
- More targeted consultation planned (Apr - Jun) to 'road test' proposed changes before public exhibition
- Proposed to have the draft plan placed on public exhibition by Oct/Nov 2026
- Plan expected to be finalised by Dec 2027

Lapsed unregulated WSPs

Lapsed unregulated WSP update



Replacement status

- 3 of the 6 unregulated plans that lapsed on 30 June 2025 have now been replaced – Murrumbidgee (Dec 2025), and Barwon-Darling and Lachlan (Feb 2026)
- The 3 plans yet to be replaced are:
 - Namoi and Peel
 - Gwydir
 - Macquarie/Wambuul Bogan

Outstanding issues and next steps

- Finalise revised CTPs in specific water sources, noting feedback from Sept/Oct 2025 consultation
- Ministerial approval (Minister for Water) and concurrence (Minister for the Environment)

Lachlan Unreg WSP - CTP consultation outcome



Boorowa River and Hovells Creek Water Source

- Two management zones created
- Lower Boorowa River Management Zone – 6 ML/day at Boorowa River at Prossers Crossing gauge (412029)
 - Applies only to Boorowa River downstream of confluence with Harry Darts Creek
- Upper Boorowa River and Hovells Creek Management Zone – no change.

Lower Mandagery Creek Management Zone

A 2-part access rule requiring both conditions to be met for access to occur:

- 10 ML/day at Mandagery Creek upstream Eugowra gauge (412030)
AND
- first flush of an average of 10 ML/day over 2 days

Key considerations for the final CTPs will be published in a What We Heard report on CTP consultation. The report will be published on commencement of all expired plans.

Wetlands

WSP protections for wetlands



Project objectives

- Finalise policy approach and implement across all inland unregulated plans by end of 2026
- Develop a wetlands-specific Minimal Harm Guideline for assessment of new works and trades
- Meet government commitments announced 9 April 2025

Project outcome sought

- Clear policy that articulates how WSPs help protect different wetland areas, including off-river pools
- Rationale for risks being managed, WSP rules applied and which areas are mapped vs unmapped (criteria)

Wetlands - what's next



Consultation – approx. mid-2026

- 2024 plans – broad consultation on map and rule changes
 - (Intersecting Streams, Border Rivers, Castlereagh, North Western, Lower Murray Darling, Murray plans)
- 2025-6 plans – targeted consultation on Floodplain Management Plan (FMP) derived wetlands only
 - FMP wetlands mapped as at March 2025 - Gwydir, Namoi and Peel, Macquarie/Wambuul Bogan, Murrumbidgee, Barwon-Darling plans)
 - Lachlan FMP under development, will consider wetlands as FMP mapping becomes available
- Current status
 - Policy finalisation in progress
 - Commencing consultation planning

Draft Lachlan Valley Floodplain Management Plan

MARCH 2026

Frances Guest
A/Director Floodplain
Management

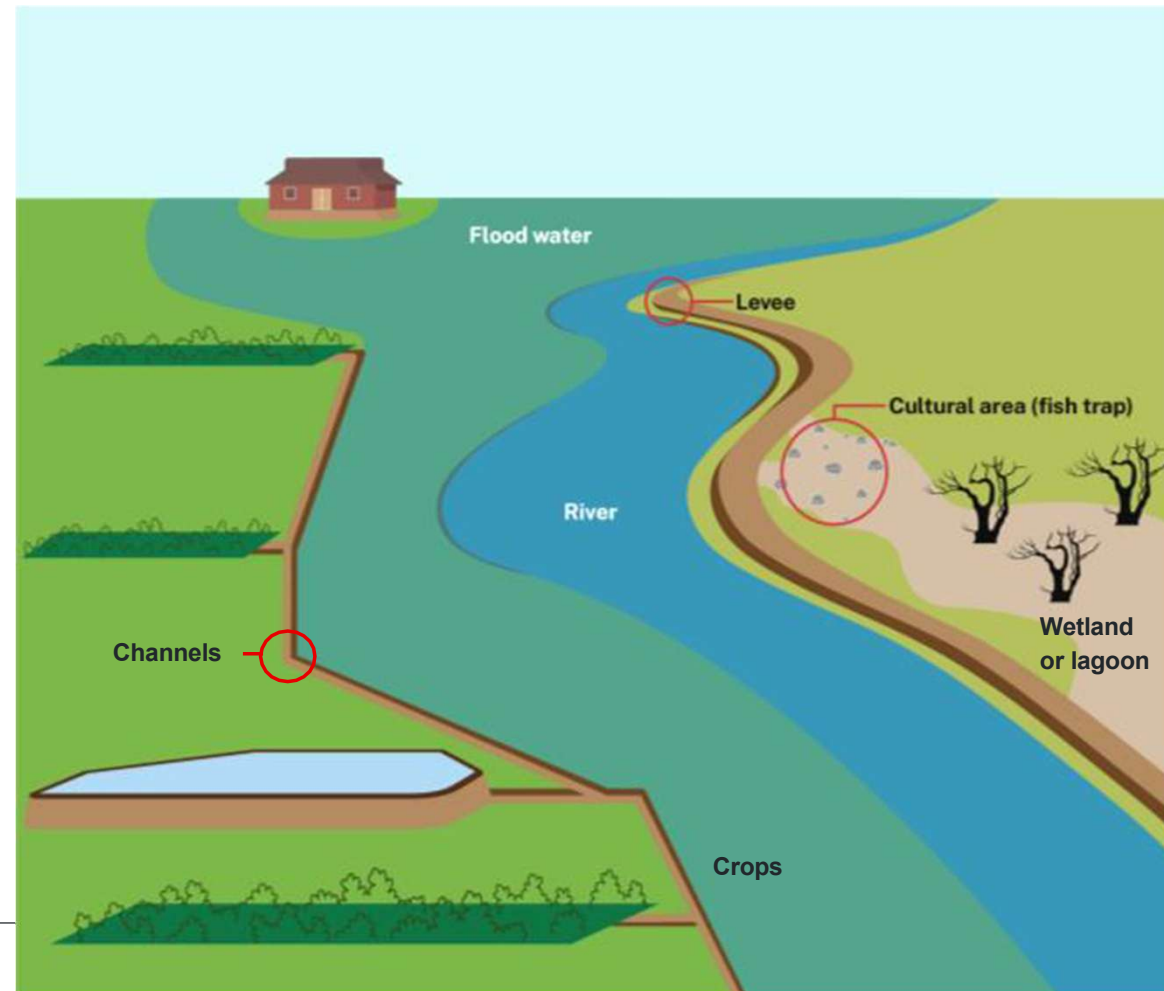
What is a flood work

Defined under the WM Act as any work that can:

- Change the flow of water to or from the river
- Change how floodwater moves during a flood

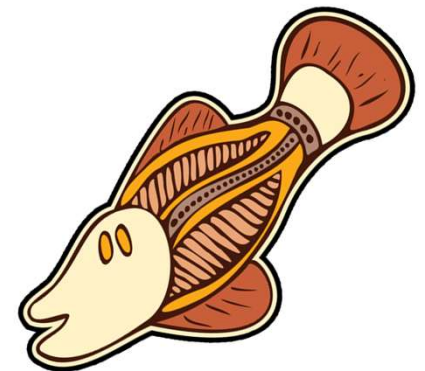
May include levee banks, channels, roads or on-farm storages.

Under s91D of the WM Act, all flood works require a flood work approval, unless exempt.

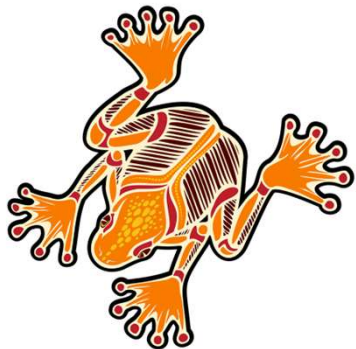


What is a floodplain management plan

- Set rules for the assessment and determination of applications for flood work approvals
- Provide a pathway for the approval of existing and proposed flood works
- Identify areas on the floodplain:
 - where the risk to life and property during times of flood is greatest (floodways)
 - which require special protection (e.g. wetlands or culturally significant areas)
- They do not:
 - deal with the take of water
 - deal with environmental water flows
 - deal with on-ground or remedial actions
 - require landholders to remove existing flood works



FMP Background



The Water Group is developing a whole-of-valley FMP under the *Water Management Act 2000* (the Act) for the Lachlan Valley.

The new FMP will replace the following existing localised FMPs that were originally developed under the *Water Act 1912*:

- Lachlan River (Goolagong to Jemalong Gap)
- Lachlan River (Jemalong Gap to Condobolin), and
- Lachlan River – Hillston FMP (Lake Brewster to Whealbah)

The planning process is largely informed by the work already completed for the Murrumbidgee, NSW Murray Valley and Billabong Creek FMPs.

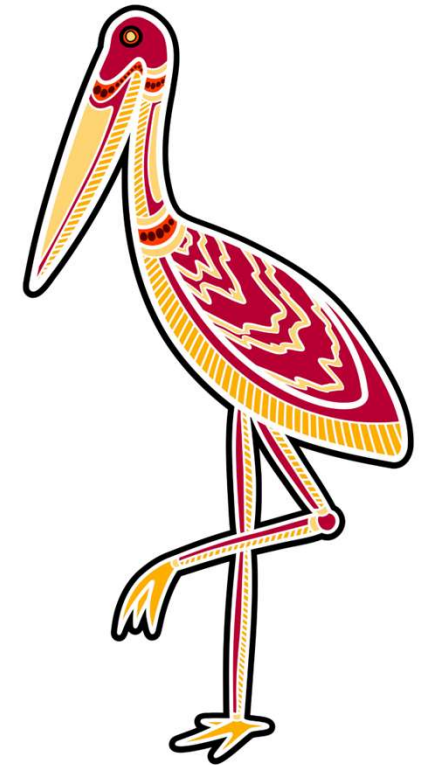
Overview of consultation

Stage 1 public consultation (Mar - Apr)

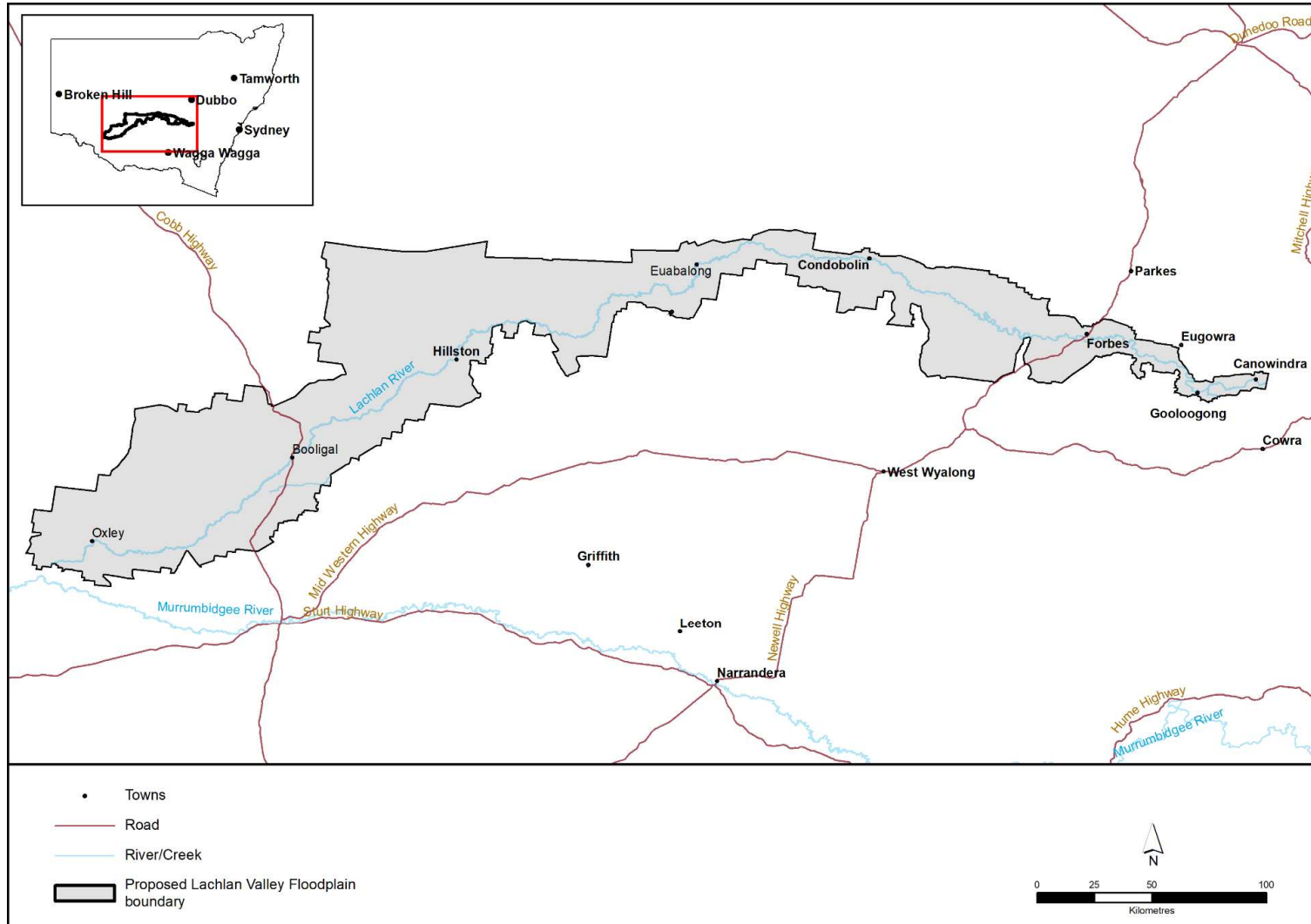
Early feedback on key elements that will be used to prepare the draft FMP including the proposed floodplain boundary, floodway network, ecological and cultural assets and localised variances to some rules.

Stage 2 public exhibition (Nov)

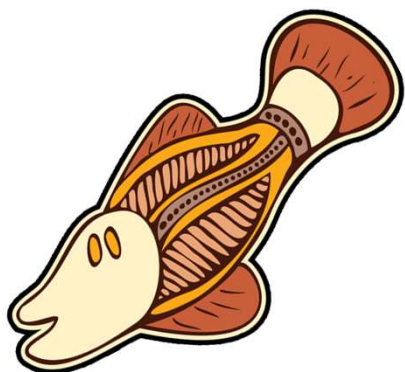
Public exhibition of the draft FMP in the statutory plan format, including management zones and full rule set.



Proposed floodplain boundary



Design floods

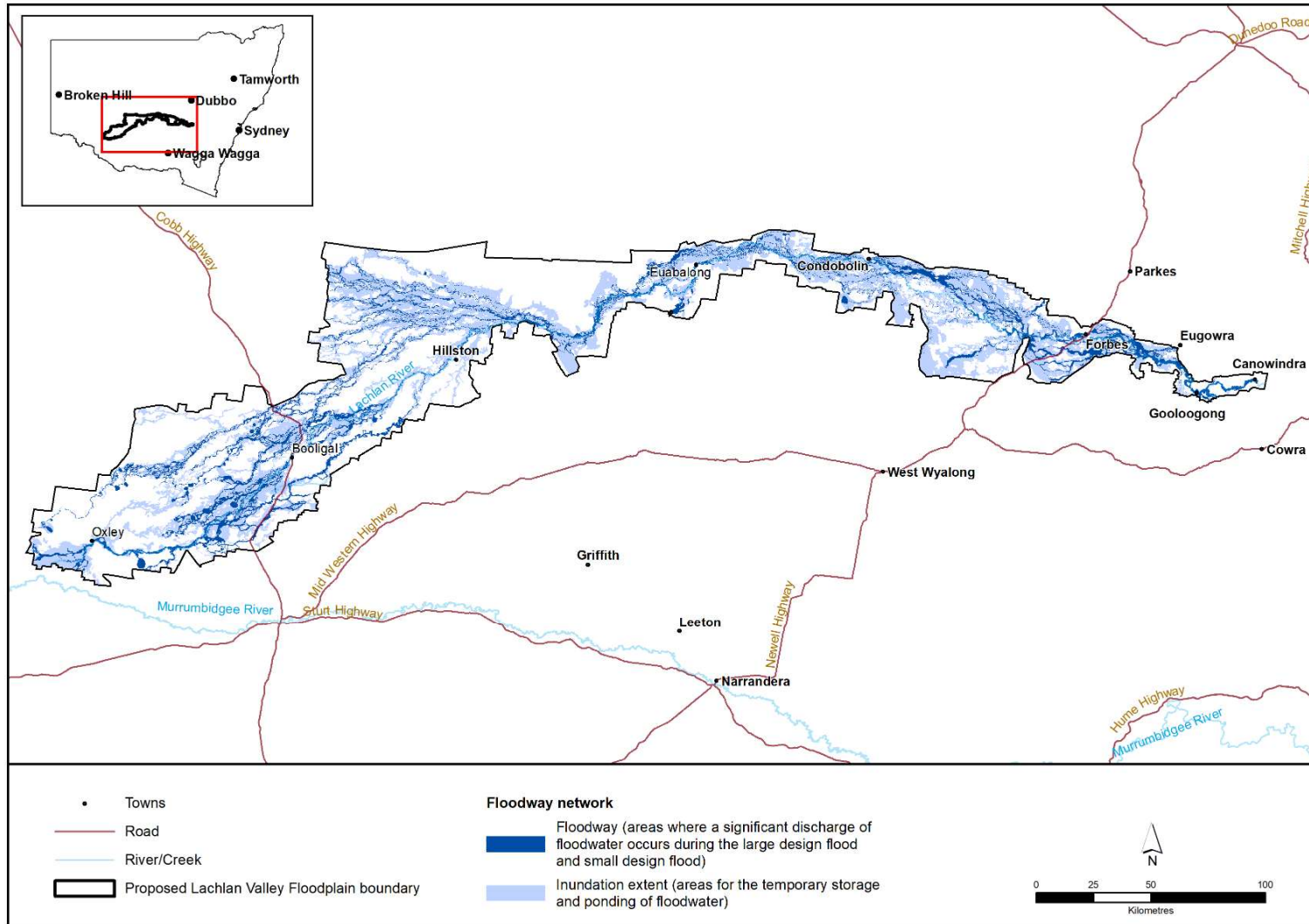


The draft FMP is being developed using two design floods of different magnitudes.

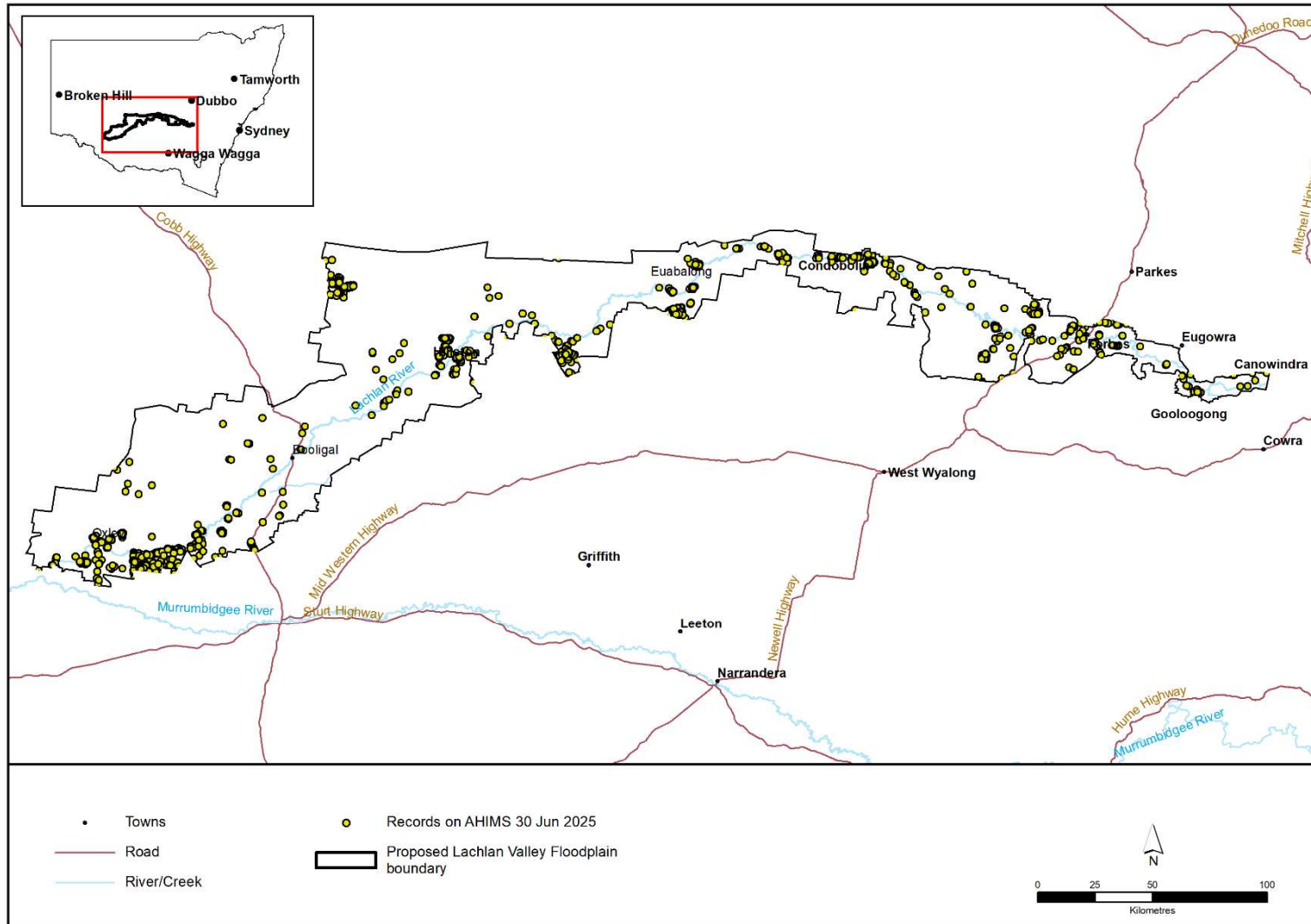
The following proposed design floods were used to model the floodway network:

- **large design flood of 2022:** 2.2% AEP at the Lachlan River at Forbes (Cottons Weir) gauge (412004)
- **small design flood of 2021:** 11% AEP at the Lachlan River at Forbes (Cottons Weir) gauge (412004).

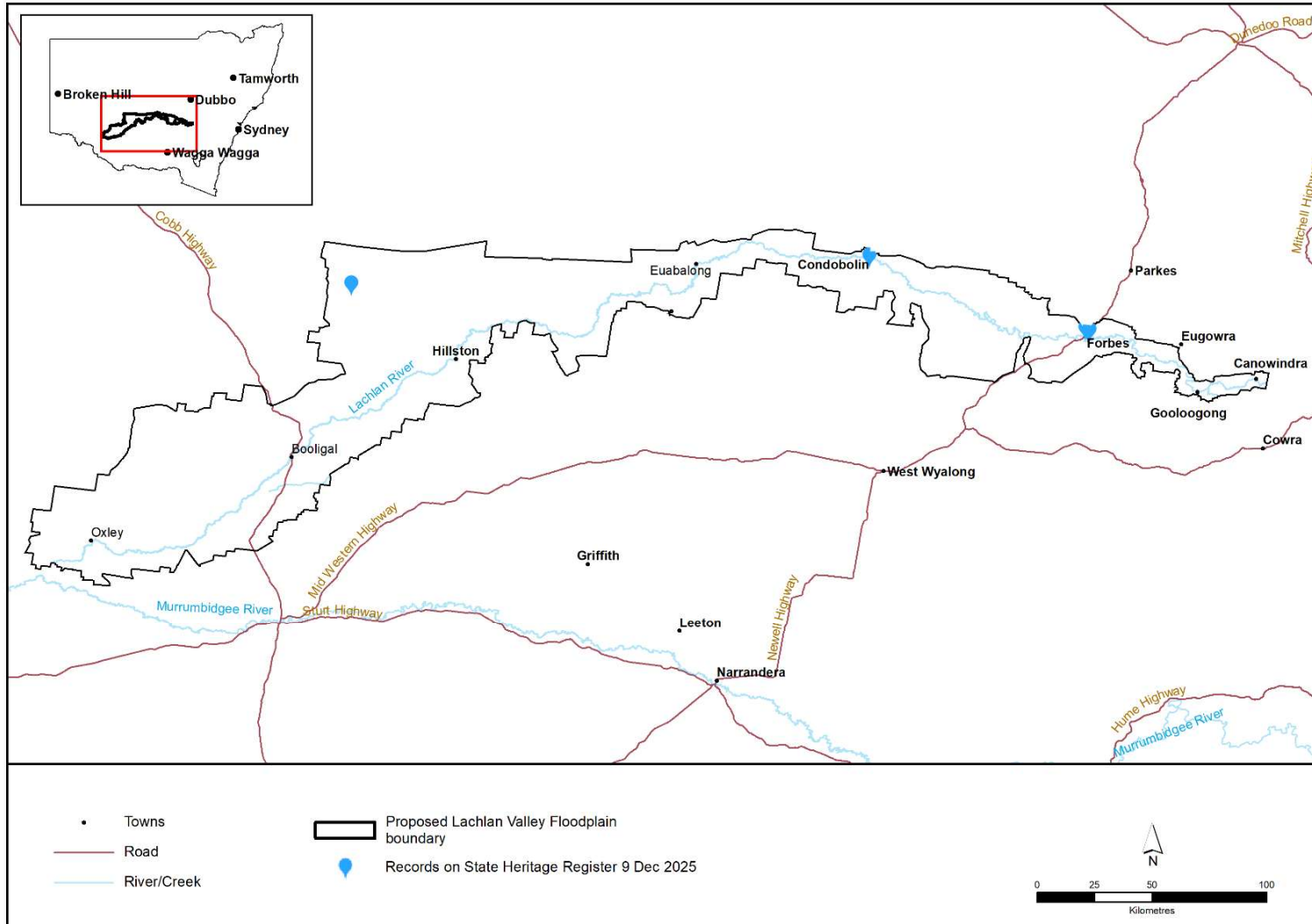
Proposed floodway network



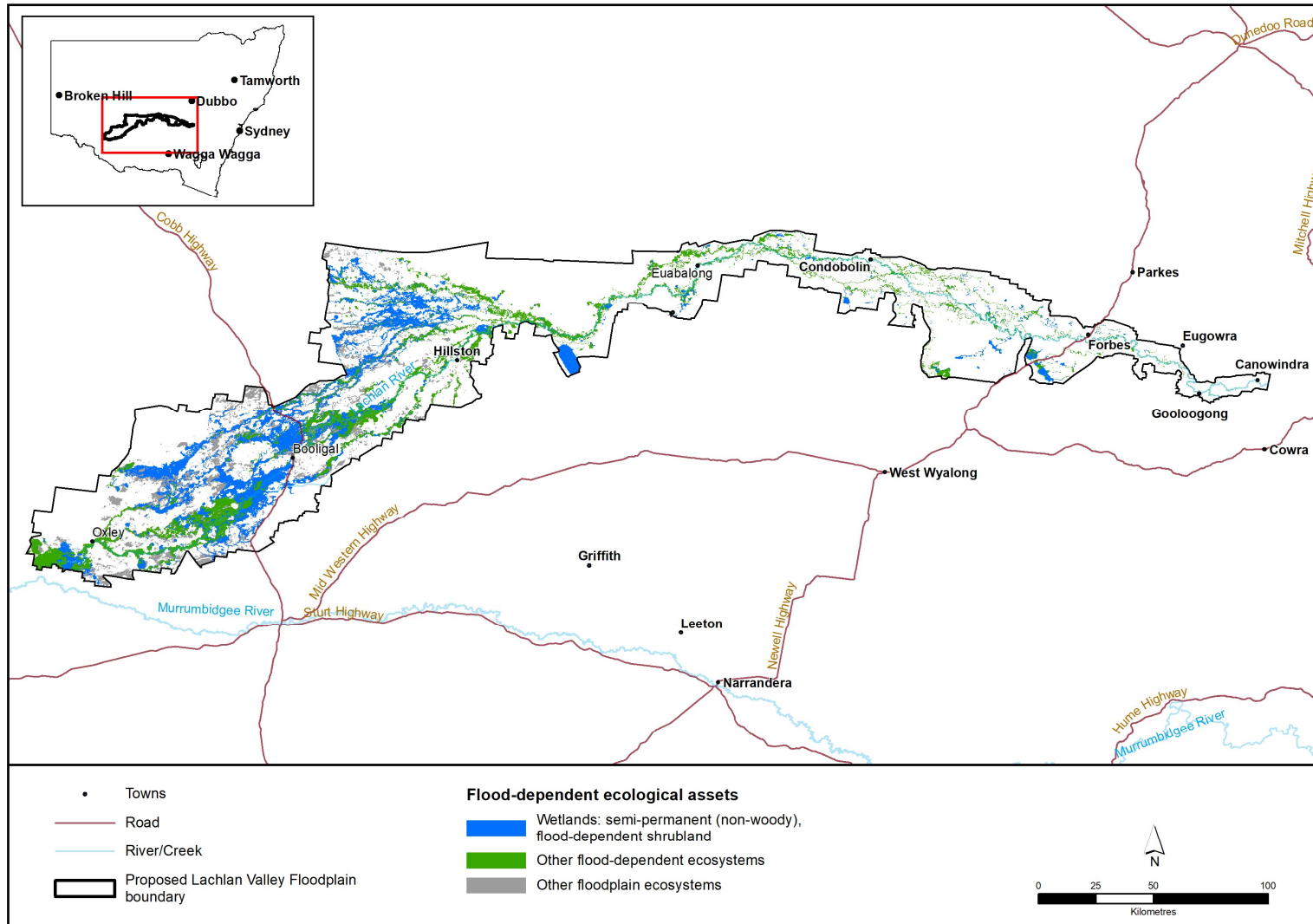
Identified Aboriginal cultural assets and values



Identified heritage sites



Identified flood-dependent ecological assets



Localised variances

Work types permitted in floodways

Access roads & Primary access roads

Supply channels (Below ground)

Stock refuges

Infrastructure protection works

Ecological enhancement works

Aboriginal cultural value enhancement works

Heritage site enhancement flood works

Aboriginal cultural value protection works

Heritage site protection works

Work heights limitations

Access roads (10-50cm)

Primary access roads (10-50cm)

Next steps

- Stage 1 Public Consultation (2 March–16 April)
- Review all feedback received during consultation, make refinements where needed and publish a what we heard report
- Prepare for Stage 2 Pub Exhibition (late 2026)



Questions

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

Valley specific metering performance update

David Andersen

Manager Metering Implementation

Lachlan CAG meetings

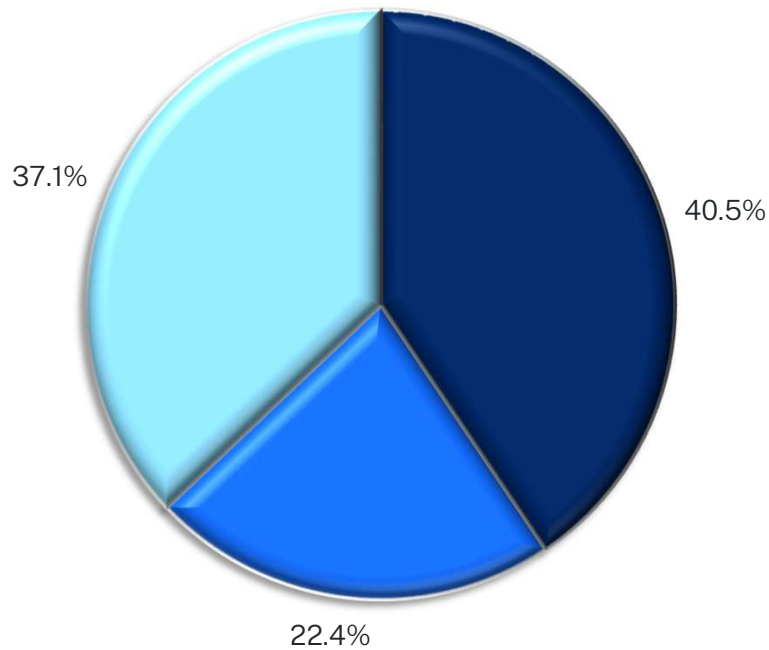
24 March 2026



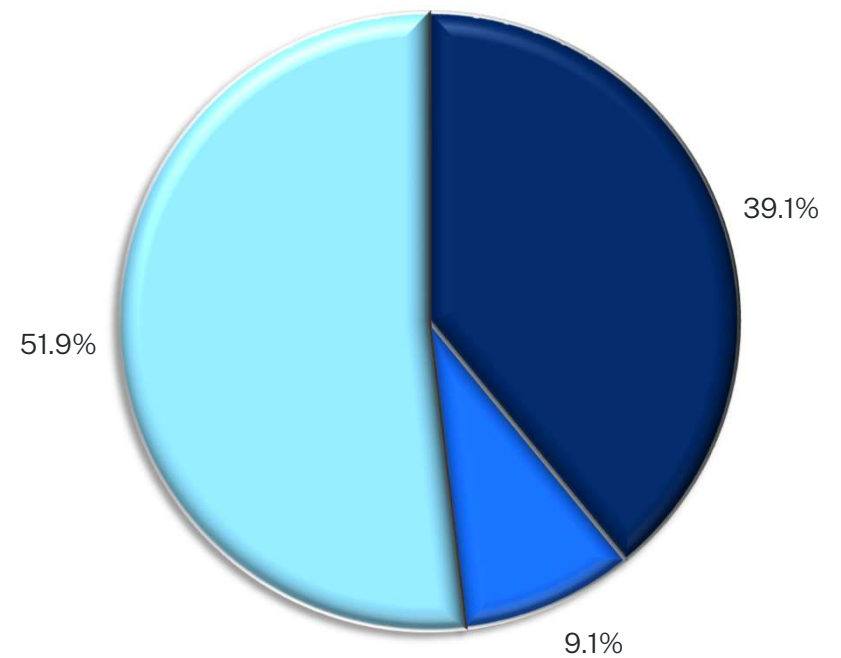
Water user profile in the Lachlan area



Approvals

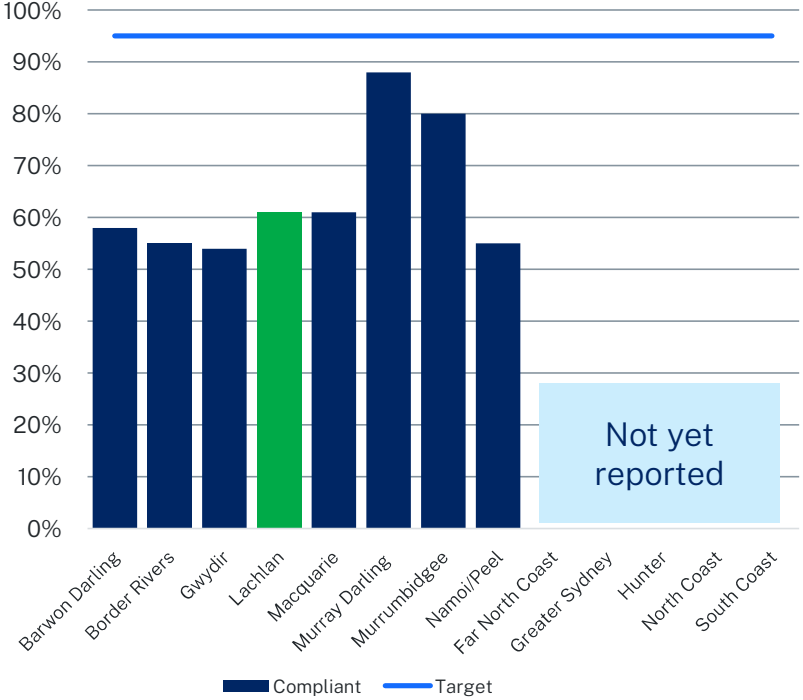
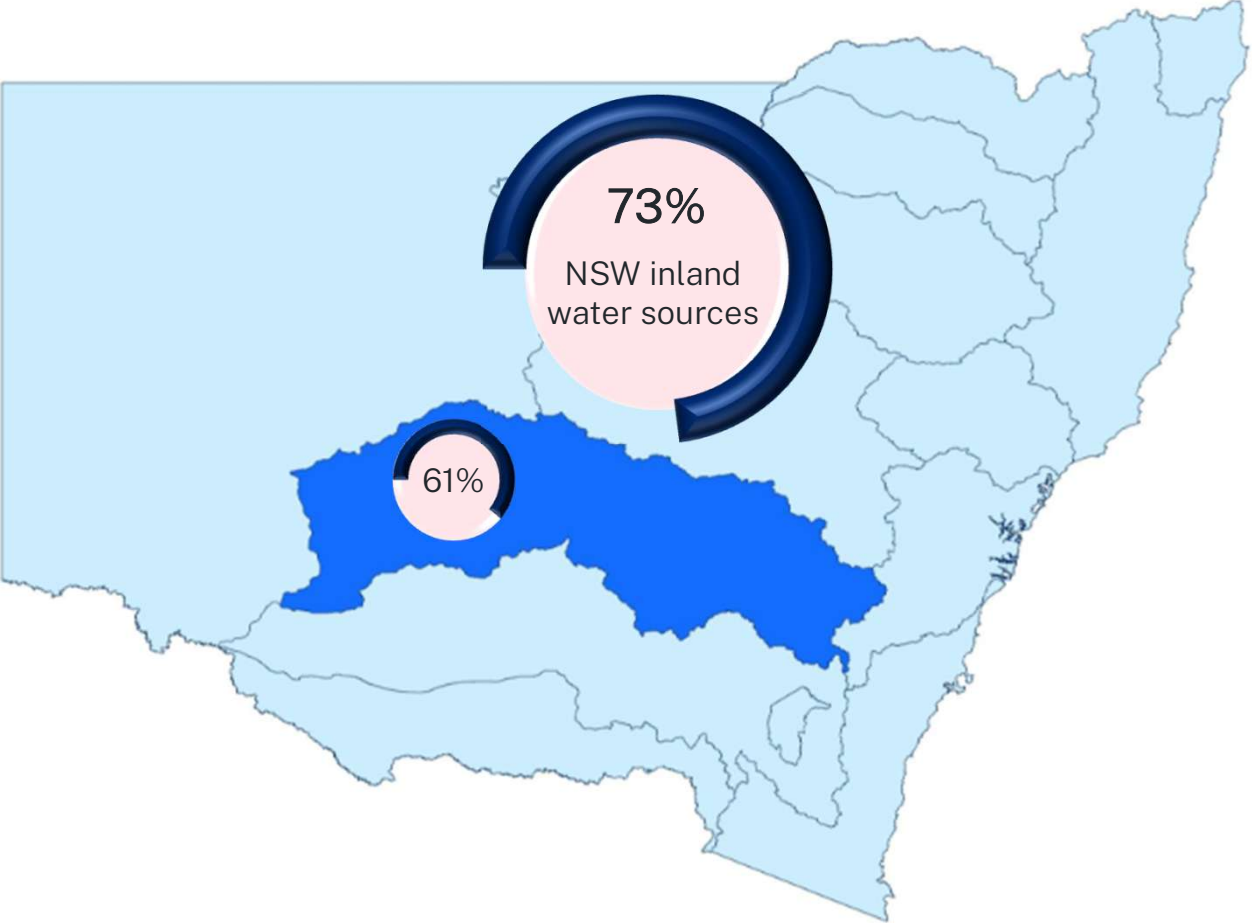


Works



■ Require a DQP ■ Self-installation ■ Exempt

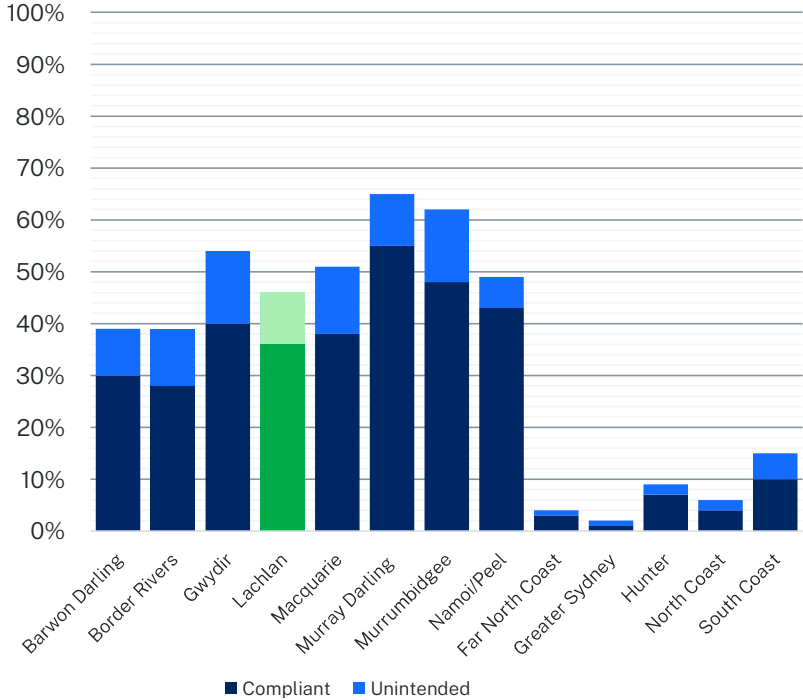
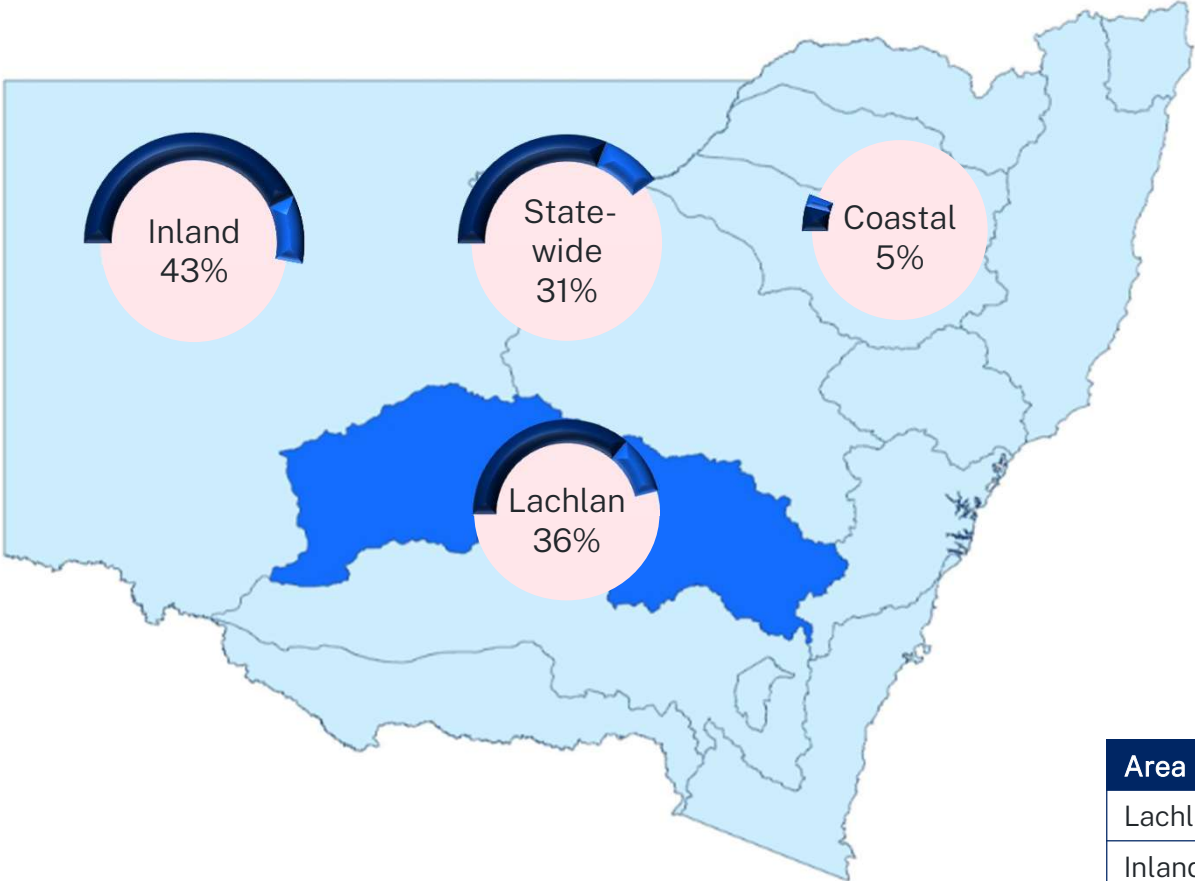
Current compliant volume of entitlement



Area	Compliant entitlement
Lachlan	61%
Inland	73%

Compliance rate; water users with 100 ML or more entitlement, & exclusion of unmeterable works and inactive works. All data sourced from NRAR. Current as at date 25/02/26

Current compliance rate of works



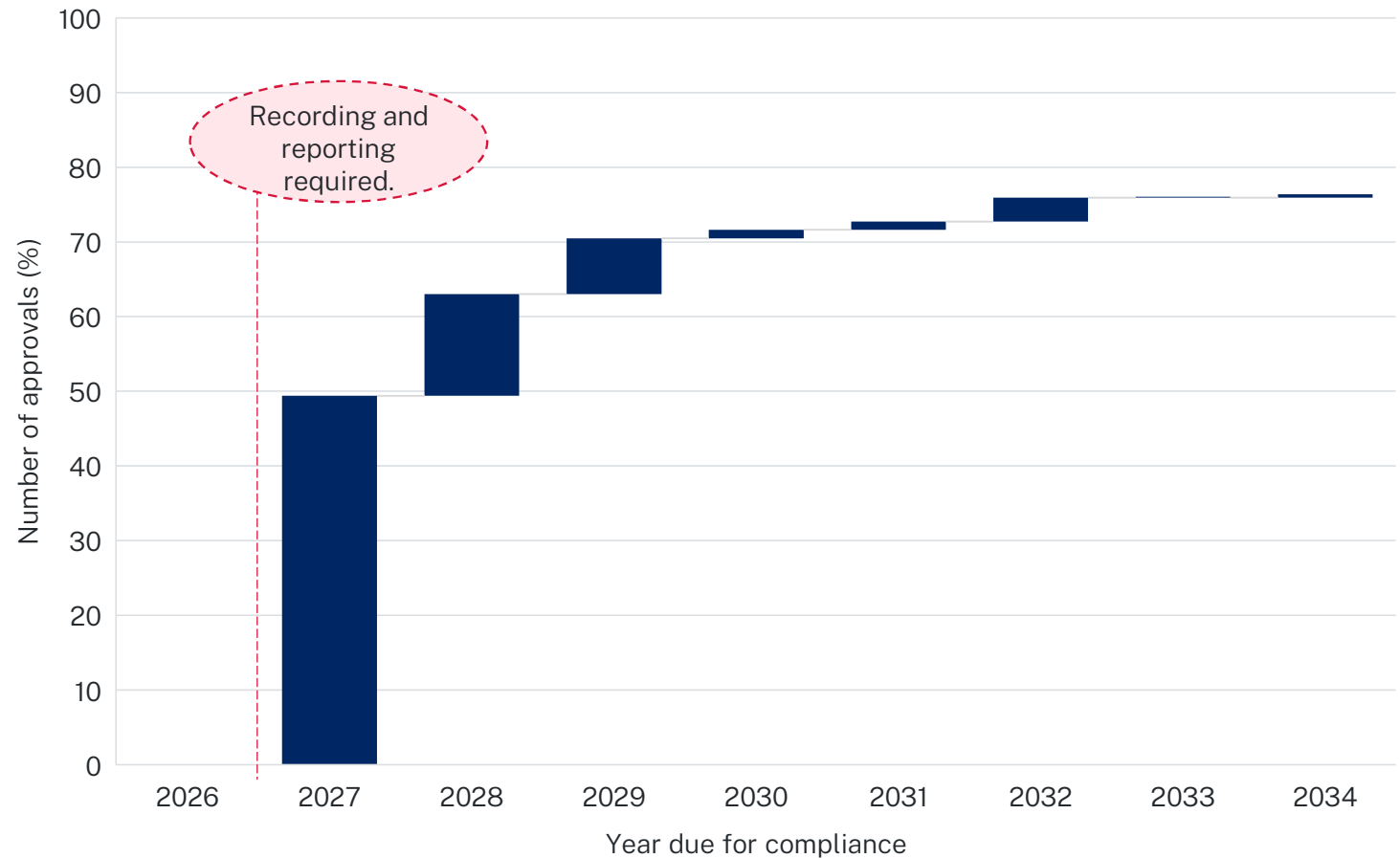
Compliance rate; water users with 100 ML or more entitlement, & exclusion of unmeterable works and inactive works. All data sourced from NRAR
Current as at date 24/02/2026.

Area	Compliance rate	Classification opportunity
Lachlan	36%	10%
Inland	43%	10%
Coastal	5%	2%
Statewide	31%	9%

Smaller water user compliance dates in the Lachlan

Despite extension for meter installations. Recording and reporting requirements Water take commences **1 December 2026**.

Having a meter installed assists substantially with reporting and provides water account tariff options.



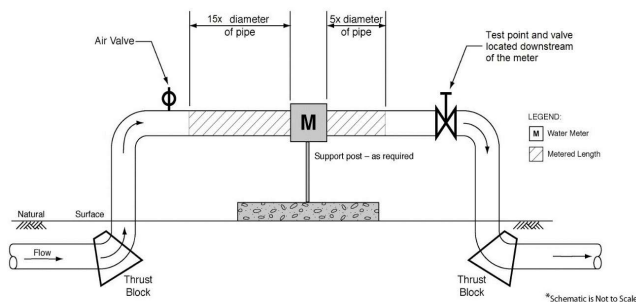
How to approach meter self-installation

Self-installation of meters is permitted if a DQP is not required for your works. There are some key steps:

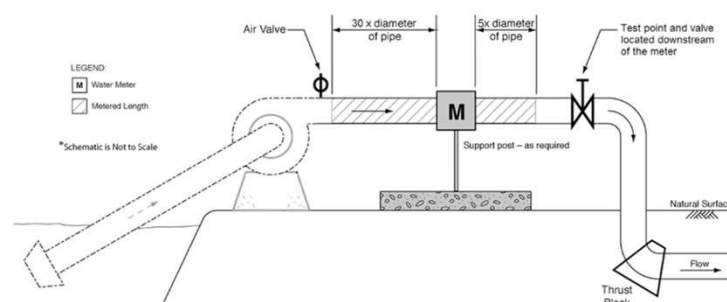
1. Buy a pattern-approved meter from your local agricultural supplier. A list of pattern-approved meters is maintained by the Commonwealth DCCEEW. Visit dcceew.gov.au > search 'pattern approved meters', click on Non-urban water metering framework.
2. Install the meter according to the meter instructions, the work type and extraction method
3. Register your installation with WaterNSW, comms.watnsw.com.au/meterforms

If a water user would still like to have a DQP install their meter, that is fine, the option to self-install is just that – an option

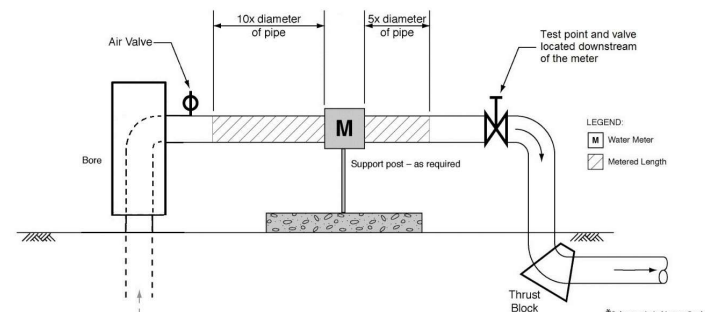
Meter Installation Plan for Two Elbows, in Plane



Meter Installation Plan for Pump causing Spiral Flow



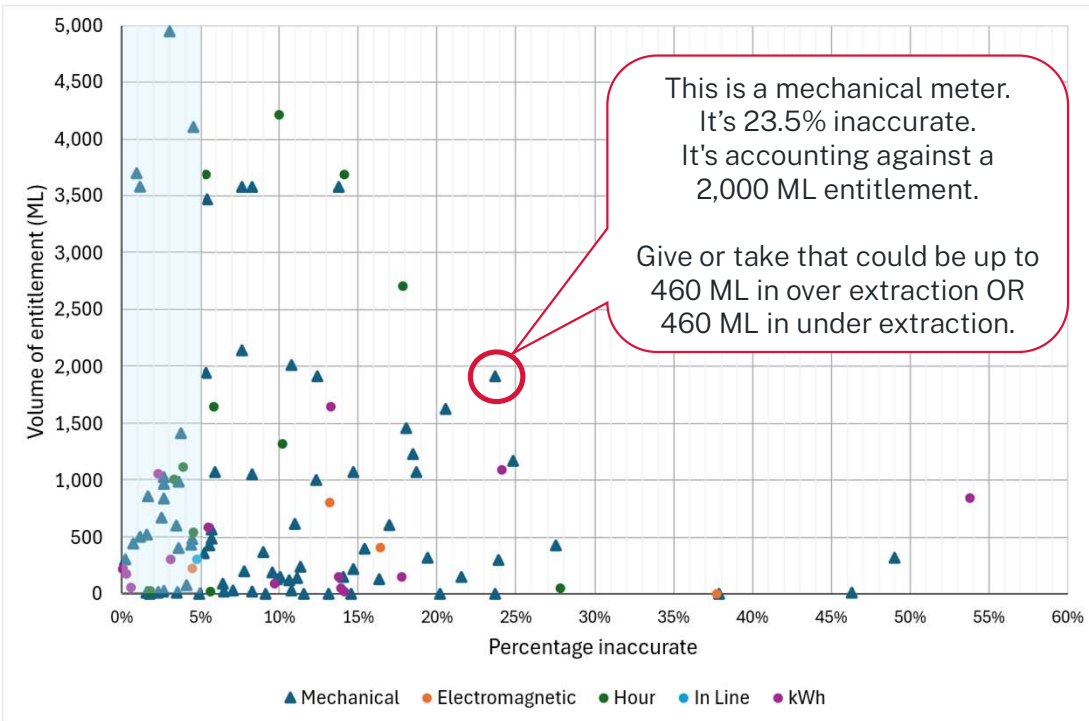
Meter Installation Plan for Underground Bore Pump



Meter accuracy

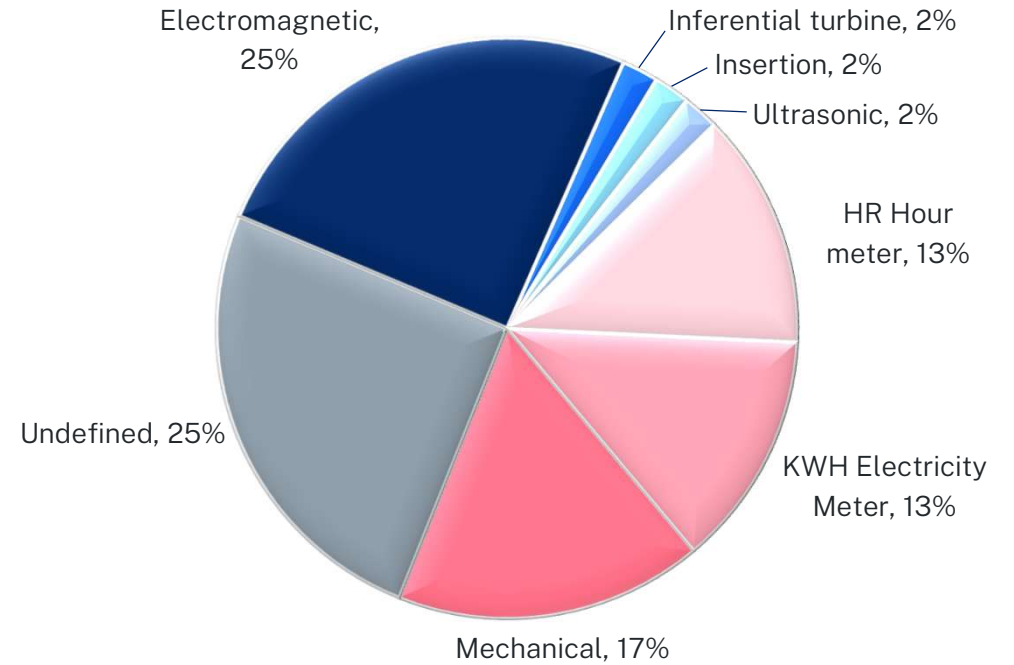


Survey before commencement of metering reform*










*Graph has been limited to 5,000 ML and 50% inaccurate to improve visual

Existing meters in the Lachlan



43% need an upgrade
 25% are unknown
31% are compliant or could be
 2,644 meters currently

Non-urban metering exemptions

-  the work is used solely to take water under a **basic landholder right**; harvestable rights, domestic & stock rights and native title rights
-  the work is not nominated by a water access licence (WAL)
-  the work is nominated by total nominated entitlement of 15 ML or less
-  the work is below the size-based exemption; single and multiple works thresholds apply
-  the work has been classified as not needing a meter
-  the work is solely nominated by a floodplain harvesting WAL
-  the work can not physically comply with the non-urban metering rules (available by application to the Minister)

Type of work	Number	Maximum size
Surface water (pumps)	1 pump	99 mm
Surface water (pumps)	2 pumps	74 mm
Surface water (pumps)	3 pumps	49 mm
Surface water (pumps)	4 pumps	39 mm
Groundwater (bores)	1 bore	199 mm
Groundwater (bores)	2 bores	159 mm
Groundwater (bores)	3 bores	129 mm
Groundwater (bores)	4 bores	119 mm

Works classification

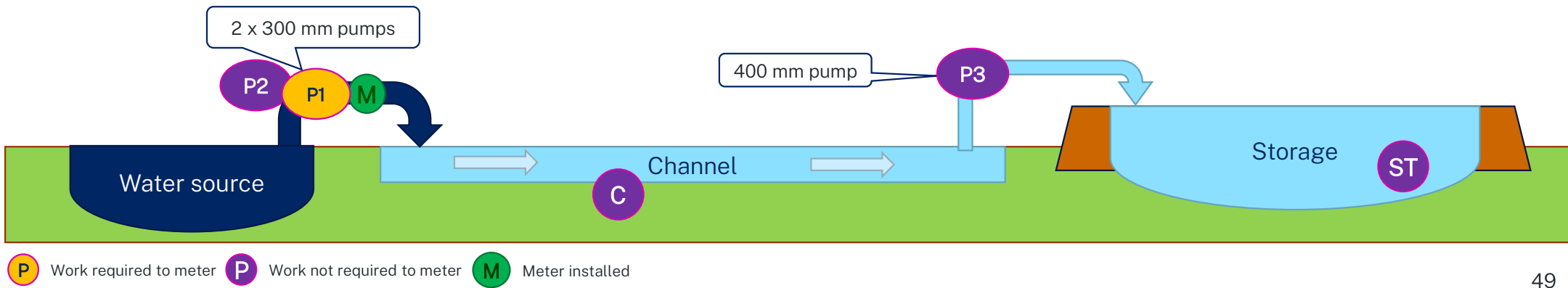
If a work is classified as:

- Constructed, non-taking work
- Constructed, basic landholder rights only
- Constructed, approval holder declared not taking water
- Not constructed
- Decommissioned

Works not classified or classified as constructed are required to be metered

The work is exempt from metering requirements, with no physical modifications required.

However, they are **conditioned not to take water** (excluding Constructed, BLR only that is permitted to take water under a basic landholder right).

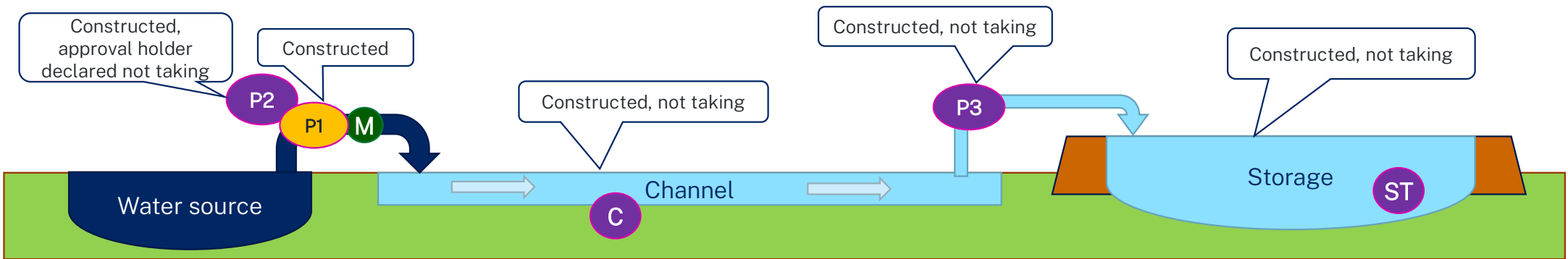


Check your works classifications in NSW Water Register



Kind of Approval	Issue Date	Expiry Date	Approval Number	Status	Water Source
Water Supply Works And Water Use	01-JUL-2016	01-JUL-2026	90CA123456	Current	NSW Border Rivers Regulated River Water source

Work Type	Description	Diameter	Status	No. of works	Location (Lot/DP)	Suffix	Work ID	ESID	Lat/Long	Authorised / Constructed	Takes Water	BL R	Classification
Pump	300mm Axial Flow Pump	N/A	Active	1	Lot 1, DP750789	Whole lot	100023456	1234	-34.0000 145.0012	Constructed	Y	N	Constructed
Pump	300mm Axial Flow Pump	300	Active	1	Lot 1, DP750789	Whole lot	100023457	1234	-34.0012 145.0012	Constructed	Y	N	Constructed, approval holder declared not taking water
Channel		N/A	Active	1	Lot 1, 2, 3 DP750789	Whole lot	100023458	1235	-34.0034 145.0158	Constructed	N	N	Constructed, not taking
Pump	400mm Centrifugal Flow Pump	N/A	Active	1	Lot 2, DP750789	Whole lot	100023459	1234	-34.0085 145.0096	Constructed	N	N	Constructed, not taking
Pump	200mm Centrifugal Flow Pump	200	Active	1	Lot 3, DP750789	Whole lot	100023460	1235	-34.0975 145.0123	Authorised	Y	Y	Not constructed
Storage	Storage - Off river	N/A	Active	1	Lot 1, 2, 3 DP750789	Whole lot	100023461	1364	-34.0000 145.0000	Constructed	N	N	Constructed, not taking



P Work required to meter
 P Work not required to meter
 M Meter installed

What are the take homes?

The Lachlan is not yet compliant -~36%, the Lachlan is made up of around 1,359 works that need a DQP, there are still approx. 864 works that need compliant metering.

There are still a lot of non-pattern-approved meters active in the valley, ~43% these need updating.

What is being done to assist?

Works classification

A targeted refinement that may reduce the number of works requiring metering by around 10% in the Lachlan – helping ensure the framework is risk-based, proportionate, and efficient.

Subsidies for telemetry

Water users in the MDB can access no-cost LIDs and installation through the Commonwealth program. With just 16% allocated, there is a major opportunity to reduce costs and fast-track compliance.

Smaller water users <100 ML

Extensions on metering deadlines give smaller approval holders more time to plan upgrades and manage costs – while still ensuring they are captured within the metering framework.

Act Now

1. Register for WaterNSW customer portal, and complete your works classification
waternsw.com.au/customer-portal
2. Register for telemetry subsidies, known as the Telemetry Uplift program (or TUP)
water.nsw.gov.au/telemetry-uplift-program

Questions



For metering and licensing enquiries contact WaterNSW

- 1300 662 077 (Monday to Friday 8am-5pm)
- Customer.Helpdesk@waternsw.com.au
- Make an online appointment with a metering expert



For more information about metering policy please contact Water Enquiries

- 1300 081 047 (business hours)
- water.enquiries@dcceew.nsw.gov.au

Subsidies for telemetry – the NSW Telemetry Uplift Program



INSTALLATION

- ✓ We do it all for you
- ✓ Installation by a government contractor
- ✓ No out-of-pocket costs for LID installation

Which water users are eligible?

- ✓ In the Murray Darling Basin
- ✓ With a combined water entitlement of 100ML or more, or who have used 100ML or more in any one year since 2023
- ✓ Who have a pattern-approved meter installed by a DQP to meet AS4747
- ✓ Who have telemetry coverage



UP TO \$2,000 CASHBACK

- ✓ Use your own DQP
- ✓ **\$1,000 cashback** for LIDs installed between 1 July 2024 and 31 January 2025
- ✓ **\$2,000 cashback** for LIDs installed from 1 February 2025

Which water users are eligible?

- ✓ In the Murray Darling Basin
- ✓ With a combined water entitlement of 100ML or more, or who have used 100ML or more in any one year since 2023
- ✓ Who have installed a telemetry device between 1 July 2024 and 31 January 2025 - **\$1,000 cashback**
- ✓ Who have installed a telemetry device from 1 February 2025 - **\$2,000 cashback**

Discussion



Peter Hansen
peter.hansen@dcceew.nsw.gov.au

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